

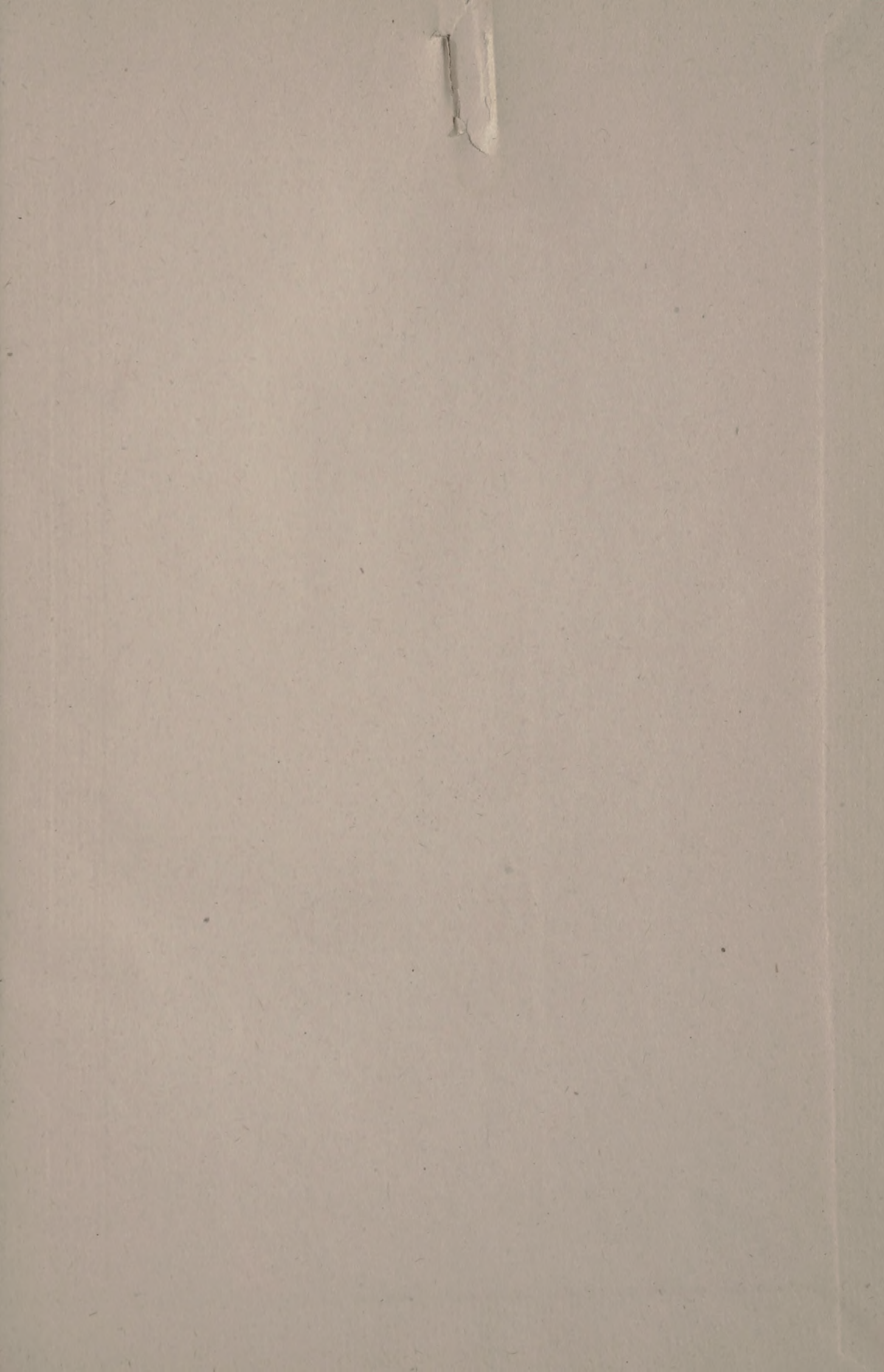


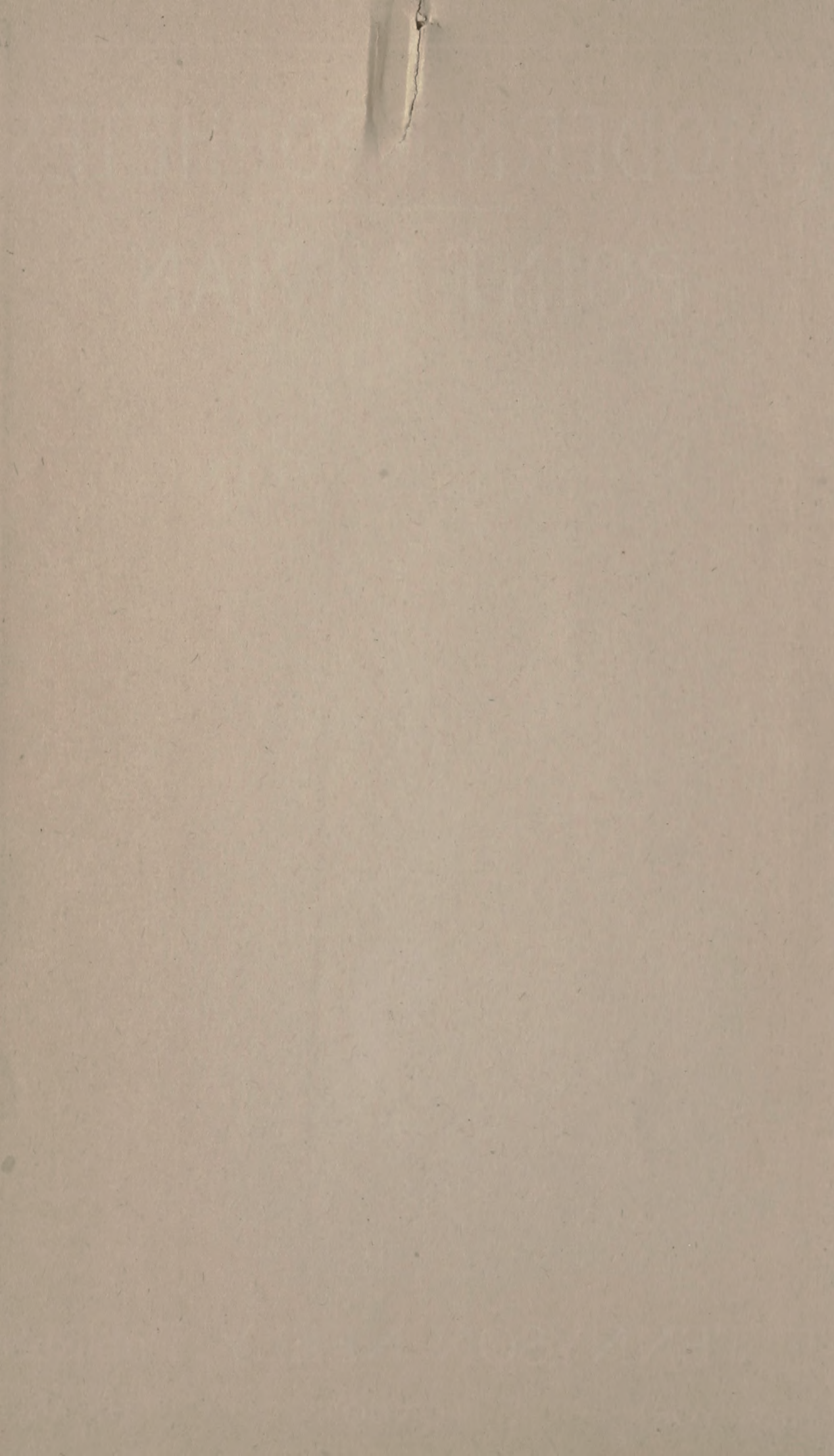
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A MODERN PROPHETESS --- POINT VIVIAN

BY
HELEN HARING



WITH THIS I CONQUER

F. TENNYSON NEELY, Publisher

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CHICAGO



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POINT
VIVIAN.

BY

HELEN HARING. (send)

Miss Helen Standing.



F. TENNYSON NEELY,

PUBLISHER,

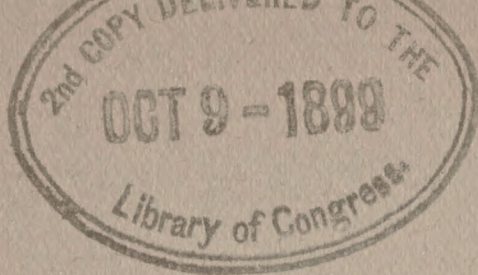
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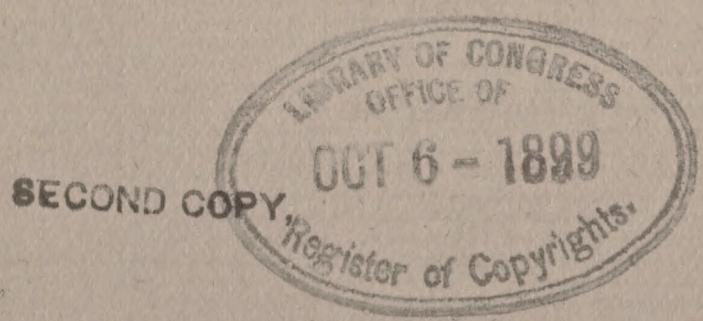
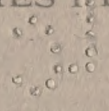
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POINT VIVIAN.

CHAPTER I.

"POINT VIVIAN."

"CARS, for Clayton. All aboard." The crowded train rushes out of the depot.

"This way, miss," said the conductor to Janet Douglas. "I will find you a seat."

But the cars are crowded. Janet follows the conductor, till the last car is reached.

A tall gentleman, with brown eyes, rises.

"Allow me, miss, to offer you a seat."

"Thank you," said Janet gratefully.

The sky darkens. The rain pours down.

"My new hat," thinks Janet, dismayed, "and no umbrella."

"Clayton," calls the brakeman.

"Pardon me. Can I assist you?"

Janet hesitated. He was a stranger. Suppose he eloped with her valise? He had a sincere, genial face. "If you please." She handed him her check.

"With pleasure. You had better go aboard at once," he said genially. "It is raining hard."

Janet daintily gathered up her skirts, and followed the noisy crowd on board the boat.

Her volunteer protector stood like a statue of Patience, with the rain pouring down. "I am sorry you had to wait so long," she said as he joined her.

"That was nothing," he said, shrugging his broad, graceful shoulders. "I was only too glad to assist you."

"I will be very dignified," thought Janet, "and merely thank him."

"May I sit here?" he asked courteously. Janet could not refuse after his efforts.

"Your first visit," he said; "too bad, the rain hides the view. The river is

like an emerald, the isles exquisite. This is Round Island. That immense hotel, the Frontenac, where so many hops are held."

As the St. Lawrence glided over the waters Janet's companion told many amusing incidents, and pointed out different places of note. Janet forgot he was a stranger. There was no trace of the genus dude, or lady-killer. If there had been Janet would have silenced him.

"An over-worked, over-worried teacher on a vacation," he shrewdly guessed; "she needs diversion."

"I spend many weeks here every summer," he said. "I think it is the most beautiful scenery on earth."

"I prefer it to the cañons of Colorado, the Yosemite, 'or even Europe.' The scenery there is sublime, oppressive to me. Here all is life and motion. May I ask your destination?"

"Point Vivian," said Janet.

"I hope we may meet again," he said. "I would be pleased to do the honors of this lovely river."

Janet smiled. "He shall not discuss me as a conquest with his friends," she thought.

"I expect to meet a chum at the bay," he said. "Came from Denver, so I have had quite a trip."

"She does not invite me to call," he thought. "All the better. I admire dignity." He studied the time table.

"Father!" said a shrill voice, "it's perfectly scandalous the way our girls talk with strangers. Them two has been a talkin' like a house afire. I know they never met afore."

"Come, Mariar," said father, a stout, genial old man. "They hain't sed anythin' harmful, 'cause I've heerd every word."

Janet's eyes twinkled. Brown eyes looked amused. "Let us talk lower, and not offend Mariar," said he demurely.

Maria glared at them in silent wrath.

She could not hear one word. She arose with wrathful dignity and stalked away. She was a thin, angular woman,

with prim, precise propriety written on her face.

"Prunes and prisms," said Janet.

"Sairy Gamp," said he.

"Point Vivian," called the purser.

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you again?" he said, rising.

"Perhaps—I hardly think so," said Janet calmly.

"Will you stay at a hotel?"

"No, with friends."

"Surely, you will have a permanent abode?" he said, chagrined at her indifference.

"Yes. Thank you for your kindness. Good-by."

With a graceful bow, Janet withdrew.

"Cool!" thought Will Lennox. "She will never run after a man or give him a chance to run after her. Not a pretty face, but an interesting one. Hope we will meet again. 'Where there's a *Will*, there is always a way.' Great Scott! I do not even know her name, nor she mine."

"Janet, at last," said Florence, a piquant brunette, greeting her warmly.

“So glad to see you,” said Ethel Schuyler. “Who was that tall, stylish gentleman that bowed to you?”

“Some one I happened to meet,” said Janet carelessly.

“You always have adventures,” said Ethel; “I might travel around the world and never have one.”

CHAPTER II.

CLIFTON COTTAGE.

"I CAME yesterday," said Ethel; "had such a stupid time traveling alone."

"This is our cottage," said Florence, as the short walk ended.

Clifton Cottage was a pretty white house standing on elevated ground. Its lower veranda opened on a large flat boulder. Tall, stately pine trees bordered a grassy path leading to the river.

"Welcome, Janet," said Mrs. Clifton, an energetic little lady, with keen, black eyes. "This is my daughter, Mrs. Bennett."

Mrs. Bennett, a slight, refined lady, greeted her warmly. "This is our parlor, Janet." She led the way to a cool, pleasant room. "You must be nearly starved, so we will go out to dinner."

They all sat down to a tempting dinner.

The walls were decorated with flags, green vines and quaint mottoes. "Eat, drink, and be merry," in letters of green pine, hung over the table. Dainty bouquets filled the air with fragrance. Napkin rings were of silver birch, with pretty monograms.

"Who is the artist here?" asked Janet.

"Florence," said Mrs. Bennett.

"She deserves a medal for interior decoration," said Janet.

"The cook also," said Ethel; "the dinner is so delicious, especially this baked muscallonge."

"I shall never care for store fish again," said Janet; "such a different flavor."

The girls did full justice to the delicious dinner. Mrs. Chadwick was a genius in the culinary line. Every dish was seasoned exactly right.

Just opposite the table the window gave a charming picture of mossy dells and green arches, through which the sunlight fell in golden gleams.

"Where is Mait?" asked Mrs. Bennett.

"Here I be, ma." A lively youth of

ten appeared, with a yellow spotted dog. "Down, Rover, old boy. Ma, I'm holler as a bass drum." Halloo (to Janet and Ethel); "ma, Reggie and I are goin' sailin'."

"You will be drowned," said Mrs. Bennett.

"Rats!" said Mait scornfully, eating hastily.

"Reggie and I bin sailin' all the mornin'," said Mait; "only upset three times."

Mrs. Bennett is mute with horror.

"Reggie's my chum. Lives over to Alleghany Point. He's got a new sail boat. He's a brick."

"Scuse me, ma." Mait is off like a rocket.

Florence leads the way upstairs. Cool, neat rooms open on the veranda. Neatness and homelike comfort everywhere.

Janet goes out on the balcony to see the view. Far as eye can reach are waters of sparkling, vivid green, with great crests of foam, which beat against the rocks like muffled thunder. Stately

steamers sail majestically along. Dainty sailboats rock up and down like birds poised for flight.

"Beautiful! superb!" said Janet.

"That lovely cottage opposite is Isle Royal," said Florence. "The small isle in front is Lone Pine Island. That odd little cottage on the left is Mr. Gibbs', a queer old bachelor."

"The house looks like a pepper cup," said Janet.

"Yes, and the owner is peppery, too. He hates dogs, cats, girls and boys, Mait and Reggie especially. Victory Lodge is on the right. Very nice people."

"There are no young men here yet to amuse you," said Florence.

"We shall be perfectly content without," said Ethel.

"Yes, indeed," said Janet, "we can do as we like. Oh! rapture! no teaching for ten weeks." She leans back in the easy-chair. Her tired eyes find pleasure in the rippling, green waters.

"Girls! I was too previous," exclaims Florence; "there are four young men putting up a tent back of the cottage."

Securely hidden behind the blinds the girls watch them. Four athletic figures are seen making coffee, and various dishes in tin saucepans.

The leader appears with a huge can of hot coffee at the tent opening. "Oh! K. D. (Cady) forever," yells his comrades, passing it around.

The smaller satellites collect the dishes and the feast begins. Darkness hides them from view. Long after midnight their mellow voices and the sweet strains of a violin are heard.

Next morning the girls embark in the Chadwick, a dainty boat, with Florence as pilot.

"Rodenhurst Cottage," said Florence. It is gayly decorated with flags, and an ancient griffin stands on the platform.

"Spuyten Duyvil" is a pretty isle, covered with exquisite moss, green, golden brown, and lovely shades indescribable.

The girls gather quantities to fill the basket Florence has kindly provided.

"Girls, here is Rose Terrace, Rock

Island," said Florence. "We will land here if you wish."

They take possession at once. It is a lovely island, with fine, velvety grounds. In the midst is a stately mansion, with windows closely barred. A long avenue of fragrant cedars leads to a quaint summerhouse, shaped like a Chinese pagoda.

"A lovely place, but lonely," says Ethel.

"Yes," said Florence, "an interesting one, too. It once belonged to Mrs. Glendemming, a lovely widow, who died very suddenly. Some people think it haunted, and it is seldom occupied. It is furnished beautifully. I believe it now belongs to Mr. Rose, of Cleveland, Ohio. The grounds are always kept in perfect order."

"I wish I owned it," said Ethel; "I would entertain my friends here every summer. I like it better than any place I have seen."

"How pleasant to own a home in this American Eden," exclaimed Janet.

"How about Adam?" asked Ethel.

"I do not want an Adam."

"Janet! Janet!" said Florence, "you unsusceptible girl; I would like to see your ideal."

"He does not exist," said Janet gayly.

"You will surely meet him here," said Florence. "The very air is full of romance—Cupid's Camping Ground."

"You think so, Florence, because you are happily engaged," laughs Janet.

"Beware, Janet," said Ethel solemnly. "Never challenge fate. Your hour approaches."

"I beg pardon, ladies," said a pleasant, manly voice; "hope we don't intrude."

The girls turn in confusion. There stand three gentlemen, stylish, handsome, well bred.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGE CAVALIER.

JANET recognizes the voice, the brown eyes. It is her unknown cavalier of the train. "I think," he says politely, "we have met before—Mr. Lennox."

"Yes." Janet smiles at his ready tact. "I am Miss Douglas—my friends, Miss Clifton, Miss Schuyler."

Lennox bows gracefully. "My friends, Mr. Ashton, Mr. Le Vere."

Ashton is a blonde Englishman, with calm, imperturbable face; Le Vere, a brunette, with a graceful, athletic figure, brilliant dark eyes, patrician features.

"This is a great pleasure," said Lennox, "to renew our acquaintance and meet your friends." He speaks as if Janet had always known him. "We are staying at the Crossmon House," said Lennox; "my uncle recently purchased

this house and I came ahead to look it over. Hope we did not disturb you."

"No," said Florence; "I fear we are the intruders."

"No, indeed," said Lennox. "I beg you will not hasten your departure."

"It is such a beautiful place," said Ethel, "that we forgot it was private property."

"Yes, it is beautiful, but gloomy," said Lennox. "I wonder how long the sunshine has been kept outside? Here come the servants to air the house."

Mrs. Smith, a dignified, elderly woman, with two maids, entered the house.

"It is dinner time, gentlemen, so we will bid you good-by," said Florence.

"Then let us escort you over the dangerous waste," said Lennox laughing.

"I am used to rowing," said Florence. Lennox protested; so he and Janet, Ashton and Florence, Le Vere and Ethel were soon gliding over the river.

"Cracky! Grandma! here comes the girls with the awfulest, howling swells," said Mait excitedly; "quick—you'll be too late."

Mrs. Clifton turned pale. "I knew it! I knew it!" she said. "They'll get in those great swells from the steamer and be drowned. Lou, run quick and get help."

"She rushed down the path, trembling with excitement, while Reggie and Mait, chuckling with sinful delight, climbed a tree. There they could see the fun.

Mrs. Clifton stopped suddenly. There were the girls laughing gayly, just landing safe and sound. And the swells—three fine-looking gentlemen.

"Mother! what is the matter?" said Florence in alarm. Mrs. Clifton sat down speechless.

Mrs. Bennett came flying down, followed by three men, Van Emmons, Bill an old boatman, and Mr. Gibbs. Gibbs was attired in an old rose dressing gown, Van Emmons was minus his hat and coat, and Bill was dragging a coil of rope.

"Keep up your sperits, ma'am," said old Bill cheerfully; "they can't be drowned."

He stopped and gazed at the gay party

open-mouthed. They were very much alive.

“What does this mean?” said Ethel.

“Are we going to be lynched,” asked Lennox calmly, “or is this a little impromptu affair to ‘rope us in?’ ”

“Will Lennox!” exclaimed Van Emmons; “what on earth brought you here?”

“This boat, my friend,” said Lennox, with a hand shake that made his friend wince.

Then Van Emmons gave way to laughter, which was so infectious that all joined.

“We thought,” he choked, “that—those ladies—were being—drowned, and—we woke old Bill up—to save them—oh—I shall die”—and he grew purple.

Down came Mat tumbling over Lennox.

“Halloo! young man, are you trying to break my head or your own?” he asked, standing him on his feet rather forcibly.

CHAPTER IV.

MAIT'S TRIBULATIONS.

"WHAT are you doing here, Mait?" said Florence severely.

"Oh! I just brought grandma down to see the *swells*," he says calmly; "she thought you was being drowned. Oh! it's too funny!"

They all burst into mirth except Gibbs, who marches angrily away, his dressing gown trailing like a signal of distress.

Old Bill drops the rope, and joins in with a loud guffaw which beats the river swells entirely.

Mrs. Clifton and Lou have just recovered their usual manner.

"We are roped in, with a vengeance," said Lennox.

Down comes Reggie with a thump.

"Are there any more of you up

there?" said Lennox. "What a flighty set you are. Oh! you precious pair of rascals! A double edition of Peck's Bad Boy."

"That's the rummiest go I ever heerd on," said old Bill, chuckling.

"Mait, go directly home," said Mrs. Chadwick severely; "and, Reggie, you leave too."

A loud wail breaks from the afflicted pair at the idea of separation. But grandma is inexorable, and they see each other no more that day.

"When we come here again, we will need life preservers," said Le Vere gayly. "I have heard of its 'raining cats and dogs,' but never knew boys to fall from the skies before."

"This is a wonderful country," said Ashton curtly; "never be surprised at anything."

"Cracky!" yelled Mait, "girls, if you want fun, come on. Them four campers are havin' a wrestlin' match."

The four campers were standing in the boats, dashing water over each other.

Rover made frantic dashes, tripping them up. K. D. had almost won the victory when——

Rover with an unearthly howl gave a frantic leap. K. D. went overboard with a splash in his most dashing style.

Mait chuckled with delight. “Confound that cur!” said the German as he rescued his dripping chum; “keep him out of my sight or you’ll see a pound party with a dog.”

K. D. walked sadly away.

The campers’ enthusiasm was dampened effectually.

They folded their tent and musically rowed away with the sweet harmony of Johnnie Smoker, and touching cadences (Cady-ences) of “good-by, maidens, we hate to leave you now.”

CHAPTER V.

A TRIP THROUGH FAIRYLAND.

It was a lovely July day. The sky was like a transparent sapphire.

The Island Wanderer was crowded with excursionists for the fifty mile trip-

"This red cottage," said Florence, "on the opposite side we call Owl's Nest. There is an elderly chaperon and sixteen teachers, gentlemen and ladies."

"Shades of Minerva!" said Lennox, "what an abode of wisdom!"

"They seem to enjoy themselves," said Ethel, gazing at the cool, shady orchard; "there are twelve hammocks. Nearly one apiece. What luxury!"

"Yes," said Janet, "there are two gentlemen with violins, and two are reading poetry likely. Fractions and verbs are buried for the present."

"You speak sympathetically, Miss

Douglas," said Ashton; "as if you had a fellow feeling."

"I have a woman's sentiments," she said gayly. "I am a teacher myself."

He regarded her critically. He had always thought a teacher was prim, precise, angular. She was dignified, but enjoyed fun as well as any one.

"You thought all teachers were Sairy Gamps, did you not?" she said laughing.

He flushed slightly. What a trick these Americans possessed of reading one's inmost thought!

"Or *Martians!*" said Lennox roguishly. "Ashton, you should have seen her."

"Who is Mariar?" said Ashton.

"Ask Miss Douglas," said Lennox gayly.

"Come, Janet, tell us all about her," said Ethel.

Janet eyed Lennox indignantly. "Mr. Lennox can tell you," she said calmly.

"Great Scott! excuse me," said he; "but there she is now."

All eyes gazed on a tall, severe, angular lady, who sat near them.

"Father!" she said frigidly to her meek parent, "let us promulgate away from this frivolous crowd."

She stalked away like an animated wooden image.

"Oh!" they all exclaimed, "what dignity—what a crushing reproof."

Lennox and Janet would tell them nothing more.

"This is Hill Crest," said Florence, "a quaint cottage on a rock riveted by iron bands."

"Nice place in a thunderstorm," said Ashton; "the lightning must play lively around there."

"I never heard of any one getting struck there, or here either," said Florence dryly. She disliked this cool, conceited Englishman.

All were now absorbed in the lovely scenery.

Numerous islands were scattered all around. Some were rich with verdure, others with massive gray boulders, like ruined castles. Tall, stately pines stood like sentinels. Dainty cottages, stately

mansions, immense hotels were scattered around.

"Darling's Dock," said the purser.

"Only a white cottage," said Ashton.

"The Darlings lived there once," said Mrs. Chadwick.

"Were they a remarkable family?" asked Ashton.

"No," said Florence.

"There are Darlings in other parts of the world," said Le Vere.

"Yes," said Lennox, "there are some on this boat."

They all laughed as Will gazed at Ethel.

"What a trick Americans have of jesting," said Ashton.

"Yes," said Florence pensively; "so strange that your countrymen come here to stay."

Ashton feels this Parthian thrust.

Echo Rock gives back the steamer's salute.

"Why is this called Lost Channel?" ask Ethel.

"Because it is deep," said Lennox,

“and the real meaning was lost, long ago, in the channel.”

Berne Light House rose like a tall monument from the waste of waters.

“How lonely! how dangerous!” said Ethel.

“Who is the keeper?” asked Le Vere.

“A Yankee sailor.”

“I should think he would become light-headed,” said Ashton.

“Oh! no,” said Janet calmly; “Americans are used to dwelling on the heights. They do not mind climbing.”

“I should think not,” said Le Vere gayly. “Far up on the rocky cañons of California and Colorado, thousands of feet from a resting place, the ambitious American has climbed, periling life and limb.”

“For what?” asked Will. “To leave a legend for future generations—a glorious legacy.”

“What is it?” asked Ethel.

“Try St. Jacob’s Oil—Carter’s Little Liver Pills—Perkin’s Painless Paint.”

“That is bad of you,” said Janet, and

loses her gravity entirely. So do all the rest.

"We are now crossing the line," said the purser.

"What line?" asked a keen eyed Yankee, peering over the railing; "I don't see any."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the purser blandly, "we are now crossing the line which divides the United States from Canada."

"Oh, rats!" exclaimed the Yankee in disgust. "I thought it were a fish line to ketch them forty-pound, Must-kum-along I heerd tell on." He put his feet down emphatically, nearly crushing the understanding of a pompous Briton.

"You lumbering idiot," he said wrathfully, "don't you know any better than to come down like that? Corns too! Oh!"

"I hain't in the lumbering business," said the startled Yankee, "and I don't own any ox. How did I knaow yeou hed korns?" And he placidly gazed at the river, while the fat Englishman limped painfully, (s)cornfully away.

There were few cottages on the Canadian islands. Gananoque was a queer, foreign-looking city. The people are kind and hospitable to the States folks, but retain the primitive customs of centuries ago.

The graceful Island Wanderer changed her course, and Alexandria Bay was reached.

Lennox escorted the party to the Crossman House.

"My mother," he said, presenting a tall, stately lady with gray hair.

"Very glad to met you all," said Mrs. Lennox.

They all entered the spacious dining room. Here a tempting repast was served. Crisp muscallonge, chickens, fresh vegetables, delicious puddings, fruits, ices and fragrant coffee.

"They are a very nice party," thought Mrs. Lennox. "The Schuylers are an aristocratic family from Albany, and Miss Ethel gives evidence of it."

"You see," said Lennox, "these two hotels, the Crossman and Thousand Is-

lands House, are built on solid rock. They are very gay, with their hops and balls in the season. The flower beds are made on the solid rock."

They visited the Indian tents, where the "noble red men" were making baskets and tiny canoes of birch bark, wound with sweet grass.

The Turkish bazaar contained curious vases, china and carved ivory paper-knives.

At the studio they examined lovely views, and then hearing the whistle, hastened on board the St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EARLY SURPRISE.

“Hoop La! Tar-rar! Whoop!” in long thrilling, ear-splitting tones, which seemed to rend the air asunder.

“What is that!” said Janet in alarm, waking in the early dawn.

“Indians!” exclaimed Ethel. “Do you suppose those basket makers have become drunk and gone on the warpath?”

Both girls peered cautiously out of the window.

Mr. Gibbs was dancing a kind of American fandango on the boulder in front of his cottage.

He was playing a tattoo on his chest with both hand, and uttering the most frenzied yells.

Suddenly he started on a run to the dock. His heels seemed to be playing

chase with the tails of his old rose dressing gown, which floated on the breeze like a balloon. His jaunty blue cap hung over one ear in a most dejected fashion.

“Girls, don’t be alarmed,” said Florence sleepily; “Mr. Gibbs is only taking his usual morning exercise—inflating his lungs. He thinks he has weak lungs. Any one who hears him yell would doubt it.”

“Oh! what a yell! He may strengthen his lungs, but he certainly weakens my hearing,” said Ethel, covering her ears.

The unearthly yells grew fainter.

“He has inflated them so,” said Florence, “I guess he has ended in spontaneous combustion.”

The girls settled down once more to repose.

CHAPTER VII.

ETHEL'S FISHING.

"LAKE OF THE ISLES," said Ethel as they landed; "what a lovely place!"

It was a sheet of beautiful transparent water, almost enclosed by lovely green isles. Shady fragrant groves made it a perfect picnic ground.

"Yes, indeed, it is," said Lennox, "and you, Miss Schuyler, look like the 'Lady of the Lake.' "

Ethel looks very pretty, in her white dress and rose colored ribbons. Her eyes are sparkling, her cheeks tinged with a rosy flush. She is so bright, womanly, winsome, Lennox thinks, using his favorite Scotch adjective. What a lovable wife she would make. What a gracious mistress for his beautiful home. She seems indifferent,

though for five weeks he has devoted himself to her pleasure as he never had before for any lady.

"This is where they catch such fine pickerel," he said.

"I wish I could," said Ethel; "I like to fish."

"I thought so," he said comically; "here is my line at your disposal. I don't believe you need any lessons."

"Why?"

"Because you understand just what to do."

"But I never caught any pickerel."

"No," he said demurely, "but another kind. Miss Schuyler, you are the most charming, original girl I have ever met."

"Mr. Lennox," said Ethel with dignity, "I am not fishing for compliments. Do you think," scornfully, "that I have no common sense—to believe such flattery? That was a pretty speech, but I wonder how many editions it has gone through."

Lennox flushes slightly. "Indeed, Miss Schuyler," he said earnestly, "it is not flattery. I mean it."

His brown eyes affirm his sincerity, and another sentiment too.

Ethel changes the topic.

"Did you ever go camping?" she asked. "What is your favorite pastime?"

"Deer hunting," he said enthusiastically.

Ethel laughs. She cannot help it after his remarks at her expense.

"I thought so," she said demurely. "Have you been quite successful?"

"Yes, at Star Lake—*here*, I am doubtful? Nearly every autumn a party of us go camping there. You should see it—a lake like a star, with an emerald setting of magnificent fragrant pines. As the deer come bounding down the forest with their graceful heads erect, like kings of the wilderness, they are a fine sight."

"What a pity to kill them," said Ethel.

"I have shot seven deer myself," he said modestly; "their antlers are at home in Boston. Miss Schuyler, I would like to teach you to shoot. You have a steady hand and nerve."

Ethel shook her hand. "I am afraid of guns," she said. "By the time the gun was loaded, ready to go off, I would be ready to go too in another direction."

"Too bad," said Lennox resignedly; "but then you do not need to go dear-hunting. They always come to you."

"Mr. Lennox," said Ethel, with dignity, "I never go hunting or fishing for dears of any kind."

"Miss Schuyler—Ethel, I beg your pardon—you are very——"

Ethel looks amazed. He has never called her "Ethel" before. By right of first discovery, by romantic meeting on the St. Lawrence, he belongs to Janet.

"Ethel!" he said gently, bending toward her, "you are the dearest——"

"Hope I don't intrude," said a tall, stylish brunette; "we thought you had fallen asleep in 'Love's Young Dream,' and Mrs. Lennox sent me to wake you up."

"Thanks," said Will dryly; "we are wide awake."

"Will, give a hand with this clam

chowder, will you, " called Van Emmons at this moment.

"All right. Excuse me," and off he went.

"Just in time," thinks the diplomatic Mary; "how nicely I planned that interruption."

"Ethel, my dear," she said sweetly, "how nice Will is, but he is an awful flirt. The girls are just crazy for him in Boston, and he can be devoted to a dozen. He says he likes the Point Vivian girls, because they are such an innocent, unsophisticated lot. I thought I would warn you in time."

Ethel's eyes flashed. "Don't worry about me," she said; "I am not the susceptible kind."

Is Lennox amusing himself with her? If so he will find she is not so very unsophisticated, if she was not born in the city of "cul-chaw."

She partakes of the delicious clan bake with a sore heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

PANDORA APPEARS.

THE seniors are chatting pleasantly in a shady nook.

Florence and John Morton, (her *fiancé*) are fishing. Mary Baron is flirting gayly with Le Vere. Janet, in a hammock, is gazing dreamily on the shining river, with the white boats gliding by. How appropriate, what Ashton is now reading—Longfellow's "Golden Legend."

"Silent, majestic, and slow,
The white ships haunt it, to and fro,
With all their ghostly sails unfurled,
As phantoms, from another world;
Haunt the dim confines of existence.
But ah! how few can comprehend
 Their signals,

"Or to what good end,
From land to land they come and go;
Upon a sea, more vast and dark,
The spirits of the dead, embark,

All voyaging, to unknown coasts.
We have our farwells, from the shore,
And they depart, and come no more,
Or come as phantoms and as ghosts."

The musical voice goes on, the ripples unceasingly repeat themselves. Janet is content, happy. The lines of care have vanished from her brow.

This is indeed a beautiful spot and a summer never forgotten by either.

"A beautiful story, exquisitely told," she said as he finished.

"Yes," he said, "it deserves to be written in letters of gold. Elsie was a noble heroine, willing to sacrifice her lovely, innocent life that the prince might be made immortal."

"Yes, her courage did not even falter," said Janet, "when warned of the terrible ordeal awaiting her. But there was some good in the prince, after all, when he tried to prevent the sacrifice at the last."

"Yes, but he was unworthy of her. Miss Douglas, you would make just such

a heroine. Your daily life," he said quietly, "is noble, unselfish. You are always cheerful, you never complain."

"How could I complain in such a paradise as Point Vivian?" she said, laughing. "You should see me in the schoolroom; how cross I can be."

"Miss Douglas!—Janet, why should you wear out your life in such dreary work?" he said earnestly, "you are fitted for something better. Janet, you are the one woman in the world——"

"Janet!" said Miss Baron airily, "don't let me disturb you but they are all ready to go home."

Ashton's imperturbable face turns white. What a vexatious interruption!

"Janet shall not win that dignified Englishman if I can prevent it," Mary muses to herself.

They sail homeward in the moonlight to the music of Le Vere's violin.

Mary is very loving to Ethel, talks incessantly.

Will mentally consigns her to remote tropical regions.

Ashton studies her coolly.

CHAPTER IX.

A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

“BUMP-TUMPITY-BUMP.”

Ethel awakes suddenly.

Has the roof fallen in?

Stealthy footsteps are heard, followed by the scratching of matches. “Burglars!” Ethel shivers with fright. There is a crash—the breaking of glass.

“They are coming through the window by the way of glass-go,” (Glasgow) she thinks with grim humor; “what a painful (paneful) manner.”

“Oh!” exclaims Janet, in horrified accents, “what shall we do?”

“Girls,” said Florence sleepily, “don’t be scared; it is only Mait. He has fallen out of bed.”

“Oh!” they breathe freely once more.

“Mait cruises around all day in

Reggie's sailboat till he is so tired he sails all night with the nightmare," Florence said.

Mrs. Bennett enters, robed in white. "Do you know where the arnica is? Mait has an awful bruise on his face."

"'Woman in white,' midnight edition," whispers Ethel, laughing.

"Yes," said Florence coolly; "it is down at the dock house, where Mait had it for Rover's sore paw."

"Well!" said Mrs. Bennett resignedly, "I don't intend to walk half a mile after that arnica this time of night."

"The woman in white" vanishes in search of the camphor, with which she binds up the wounds of her sailor boy.

Next morning Mait appears with an eye in deep mourning, and a huge, sky-blue bump on his noble brow.

"Cracky," said Reggie admiringly, "you look like Sullivan after Corbett licked him."

"I drempt I was sailin'," said Mait, "'n,' I landed 'fore I got reddy."

CHAPTER X.

ROSE TERRACE.

ROSE TERRACE is an enchanting spot as the afternoon sunshine falls on it. The lawns are like smooth green velvet, over which the fountains send refreshing showers.

Cedar Avenue, with its overarching trees and rustic seats, forms cosy nooks for Mrs. Lennox's guests.

There are twenty-five in all, pretty girls, in dainty summer dresses, courtly gentlemen and stately parents. The wide verandas are gay with awnings. A hidden orchestra fills the air with music. Beautiful flowers, lilies, violets, roses mingle their sweet perfume with the cedar and pine. Delicious refreshments, such as the appetizing river air demands, are served. It is not a fashionable five o'clock tea which O. W. Holmes has de-

scribed as "gobble, gabble and git," where ethereal refreshments, light and as satisfying as thistle down, are served, with homeopathic cups of coffee. There are delicious rolls, cold meats, salads, cakes, juicy fruits, refreshing ices.

"Miss Schuyler, have you seen the rose garden?" asked Lennox.

"No."

"Then we will go now, if you like."

He opens a gate into a garden enclosed by shrubbery.

"This is my mother's hobby," he said; "it runs in the family. Mrs. Glendemming was very fond of roses."

"A paradise of roses," exclaimed Ethel in delight. "Oh! how lovely, how exquisite."

Great clusters of lovely blush roses, pure white, sunset brier, the delicate moss, rich yellow, and deepest crimson mingle their beautiful tints together and fill the air with spicy odors.

They walk slowly down the fragrant alleys to the summerhouse, embowered in green vines.

Ethel's sweet, womanly face and dainty white dress form a most attractive picture in the rose garden.

Will is nervous, constrained. "I will know my fate to-day," he thinks. "No one shall interfere."

"Who was Mrs. Glendemming?" asked Ethel.

"My great aunt," he answered, "the original owner of Rose Terrace. Gabrielle was a very beautiful lady, and a great belle in society. She idolized her husband. They gave very fine entertainments here and in their home at Washington. Her husband was killed in an accident and she was completely heart-broken. For five years she devoted herself to charity. Her only pleasures were her rose garden and music."

"Poor Gabrielle," said Ethel softly; "all her wealth could not comfort her."

"No," he said gravely. "Miss Schuyler, I never see you alone any more. You seem to avoid me."

"Why should I?" she said carelessly.

"She cares nothing for me," he thought bitterly; "still I will know."

"I have an important question to ask you," he said.

"The Lover's Retreat—ah!" exclaimed Miss Baron.

"Confound it," mutters Lennox.

"Did you speak?" she said innocently. She understood the expletive. But she had come to stay.

Le Vere appears.

"She shall not spoil their fun," he thinks with a look at Lennox's perturbed face.

"Miss Baron," he said courteously, "will you take a stroll with me down the avenue?"

"Thanks," she said languidly, "but it is too hot. I prefer staying here."

She fans gracefully, chatting serenely.

"Then with your permission, I will join you. By the way, Will, your mother wishes to see you and Miss Schuyler at the house."

His imaginary summons sends Will and Ethel off rejoicing.

Mary bites her lips, her eyes flash savagely. "I will pay you for this, Adrian Le Vere," she thinks.

"Oh! how I would like to see the whole house," said Florence to Janet; "it had such a mysterious air about it all these years it was closed."

"That wish shall be granted, Florence," said Mrs. Lennox graciously.

She had just happened to pass by.

"I beg pardon," said Florence, blushing; "you will think me curious."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Lennox. "I like to please my guests. Will, please take these ladies through the house?"

"With pleasure," said Will politely.

He pilots them through long suites of rooms, with shining, polished floors, rich rugs, lovely pictures and statuary.

In the parlor is a grand organ, richly carved.

"This was Aunt Gabrielle's," he said; "she was a fine musician. She gave it to my mother, with all the furniture of her rooms. They have not been used in years till now. We reserve her boudoir just as it was."

He opened a door at the end of a long corridor.

“We do not show it to many, but you are friends.”

It was a large, octagonal room, with a magnificent rose window of stained glass, painted by a master hand. The walls were hung with rich, rose colored brocade. A rich velvet carpet, luxurious easy chairs, carved tables, rare paintings, bric-a-brac, etc., made a most exquisite bower, fit for a queen. Silver lamps of antique design hung from the ceiling.

A Madonna, by Titian, gazed down upon the group, with a face of divine purity and beauty.

“How lovely! how perfect!” they all exclaim. “It is like a fairy bower.”

“And this queer cabinet?” said Ethel. It is a richly carved one of sandalwood.

“The top forms a perfect rose,” said Lennox; “but the key has been lost for many years. Whoever finds it will possess it, also marry a Lennox, if”—laughing—“they can manage to overlook his defects.”

“Mary Baron ought to find it,” said Janet; “she has perseverance.”

Will shrugs his shoulders. "Yes, if she seeks for it as she does for admirers."

"Florence," said Janet, "let us go in the rose garden. It is lovely there."

Lennox smiles as he opens the private door leading to the rose garden.

"Ethel," he said earnestly, "I wish you might find the key."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAGIC KEY.

"Do you think you could take me for better or worse? I have loved you since I first saw you."

Ethel's heart beats with suffocating gasps.

His brown eyes are gazing into hers with love unutterable.

"Mr. Lennox," she said coldly, "I wonder how many times you have uttered those words?"

"Ethel! what do you mean?" he asked.

"I am not quite so unsophisticated, Mr. Lennox, as you think all the Point Vivian girls are; and as you said."

"Ethel!" indignantly, "I never said so. The Point Vivian girls are as intelligent and cultured as any I have ever seen. That is why you were so cool. Ethel, who uttered such a falsehood?"

"I would rather not tell."

"I know—that Baron girl. She has made mischief ever since she came. I wish she was in—Guinea. Ethel, you need a guardian to protect you. Will you accept me?"

"But your mother?"

"She will be pleased."

"But the lost key."

"Cupid laughs at locksmiths."

"Mr. Lennox, you would make a good lawyer."

"Very well—this, my maiden plea, is finished. What has the Court-ed to say for herself?"

He waits anxiously her answer.

"Yes," she said shyly. "Mr. Lennox, how absurd you are!" laughing softly.

"Very well," he said with mock dignity, "I fine you for contempt of court-ing and shall collect the costs at once."

He kisses her reverently.

Gabrielle's sad, beautiful face, Lionel's dark, tragic eyes gaze upon them. The Rose Window gleams like countless rich jewels in the rays of the setting sun. It

is reflected in a golden halo above the Madonna and falls like a glorious benediction on their radiant faces.

They pass down the long avenue. Nearly all the guests have gone.

“Mother,” said Will, “court has adjourned. I have brought you a new daughter.”

“Ethel, my dear child,” said Mrs. Lennox affectionately, “I am so glad.”

Her formal reserve is all gone. She is well pleased. Ethel’s bright intellect, her well-bred manners, and above all, the absence of all exertion to win her son’s attentions just suit her fastidious taste.

Ethel’s awe of her disappears. Florence, Janet and Mrs. Chadwick warmly congratulate them; their escorts likewise.

“So romantic,” observes Mary, “that dear Ethel never knew Will Lennox was the only child of a millionaire and ex-senator till after she was engaged.”

Mrs. Chadwick smiles serenely. She knew it, but had not told Ethel.

CHAPTER XII.

JANET'S SECRET.

MOONLIGHT covers Rose Terrace with silvery splendor. A few guests still remain in the parlor. A pretty Scotch lady is singing "Robin Adair" with pathetic sweetness. Janet listens with a heart filled with restless pain.

"You are tired," said Ashton kindly, bending over her.

"Yes, a little," trying to smile.

"Oh! Mr. Ashton, come out on the veranda," said Mary, "and see the lovely view."

He hesitates. "I will excuse you," said Janet.

Mary leads him off in triumph.

"Cheek!" exclaims Will, *sotto voce*. "If she does not capture him it will not be for lack of trying."

"Janet," said Florence indignantly,

“why did you let her carry him off like that?”

“Why should I care?”

“She is trying to cut you out.”

“Let her try. I shall not try to retain any gentleman’s attention by my own special exertion.”

“What’s this dull town to me,
Robin’s not here.”

“Oh! Robert, my darling, my best beloved,” her heart cries, “why were you taken away? So noble, so good, so true. How can I live without you?”

The familiar song has awakened the sorrow, unutterable.

It is the “Open Sesame” to the dreary sepulchre in which lie buried love, hope, ambition. The skeleton of grief is at the feast. She beholds him again—the tall, manly form, the noble brow, the clear dark blue eyes, the wavy brown hair.

Once more the awful agony of renunciation, the noble heart stilled forever, with the white violets on his breast.

Three years—and she cannot forget.

Loneliness, desolation sweep over her like a flood. Her only brother, all the kindred she possessed, gone forever, "Why do I try to live, to be cheerful?"

The gay voices jar on her to-night. She has tried to bear her burden alone all these years. She is tired, weary of life. Suitors she has had, plenty of them, but they do not touch her heart.

"Miss Douglas, we are too gay for you," said Le Vere sympathetically; "what can I do for you?"

"Nothing, thank you," she said, with a sad smile.

"You are lonely, sad," he said kindly. "Ah! I know what that means. My parents died when I was very young. In all the world I have no kindred, not a relation to care whether I live or die."

His dark eyes are full of sadness.

"He is always so gay and bright," Janet thinks, "but he too has known grief."

"That is very sad," she said softly. "I too am alone in the world."

"You are fond of music?" he asks.

"I love it."

"You play?"

"Not at all. I do not understand a note. I wish I did."

"You have a musician's soul," he said eagerly; "you feel the spirit of it all. I will try to make you forget."

The grand instrument responds to the master's touch, and fills the room with enchanting music.

Schubert's dreamy serenade, Mendelssohn's, Beethoven's, Mozart's exquisite melodies fill Janet's soul with ecstasy. Grief—despair—are lulled to rest, as if by the touch of magicians.

"How pale she is," thinks Le Vere; "how tired the dark eyes. How she has suffered; and yet she was always cheerful until to-night."

He longs to fold her in his strong arms, to bid the sad, weary heart grieve no more. But Ashton! No, he will not try to win happiness at the price of honor. He is doomed to live solitary. What does he care for fame, honor, riches, without her?

"It was grand, glorious," said Janet, her eyes sparkling. "Many thanks. You made me forget."

"Then I am repaid a thousand times," he said.

Her praise is sweeter to him than that of the guests on the veranda, who crowd round him with applause.

He bows graciously and then disappears.

"Yes," said Lennox, "he is a genius, a wonderful musician. He has played before the finest, most critical audiences at private houses in Paris, Berlin, Vienna. Nothing will induce him to go on the stage; though they have advised him to do so, and he has always received a regular ovation. He is a fine artist, has won several gold medals. His picture, 'Meditation,' won a high place in the Paris salon."

"Is he a Frenchman?" asked John Morton.

"His father was a celebrated French artist; his mother a De Garzo, of Spain, an ancient, noble family. She

was very beautiful, and a fine musician. Both families were noted for genius, artists and musicians especially, and for great wealth."

CHAPTER XIII.

A MIDNIGHT TRAGEDY.

“ME-OW-MARIAR-YOW-YOW!”

“What is it?” said Ethel, as unearthly howls rose on the midnight air.

“Catilini’s orchestra,” said Florence calmly, “under Signor Tomas.”

“Isn’t that dreadful?” said Janet, as a thrilling crescendo arose. “It sounds like ‘Down on the Suwanee River.’”

“I wish they were there. There!” said Mrs. Chadwick triumphantly, “that’s Major Hopkin’s big black Thomas. He’s the leader always, and the worst thief. He ate all the custard out of those pies yesterday. He ought to be killed.”

Out flew a pair of old shoes at the sinner.

But Thomas only winked mildly and went on with the unearthly yowls.

Two other cats assisted him ably.

"I believe nothing will kill that torment," said Mrs. Chadwick in despair.

They evidently regarded all missiles as striking applause. Three pails of water were emptied on them without quenching or dampening their enthusiasm. The howls rose louder and louder, and woke all the echoes of Point Vivian.

"Let me try my sling shot," said Mait; "that will settle them."

Crash! it went through Mr. Gibbs' window.

"What the deuce is that?" he roared, jumping up; "what blamed idiot is firing pistols at this time of night?"

Nothing was heard but the doleful wail of the felines.

"Great Scott! What an infernal racket!" He hastily donned his old rose dressing gown. "That villain of a Thomas, too. Ah!"

Old boots, new boots, books, every available article went flying through the air. Still they sung calmly on. All his artillery was exhausted except an iron bootjack.

Just as he seized it Signor Tomas raised his voice in a thrilling, blood-curdling yell. The bootjack fell with deadly aim.

"There!" said Mr. Gibbs, chuckling. "That must have been his ninth life. That pesky varmint has tormented the Point Vivian folks for years. Great Scott! won't the Major tear round and rave."

He crept cautiously to the river's bank. "'Tis the last of old Thomas left blooming alone. All his scared companions are scattered and gone," he exclaimed. "Let the St. Lawrence bury its dead." He threw it energetically into the river.

He threw up his arms and executed an Indian war dance of triumph.

"I shall die of mirth if he keeps it up much longer," said Ethel; "his dressing gown looks like a banner of victory waving in the breeze."

"He looks like a jumping-jack," groaned Mait. "oh, if Reggie was only here."

"I am glad he is settled," said Mrs. Chadwick contentedly.

"Too much water on the brain for Thomas," said Florence.

Mr. Gibbs, entirely unconscious of spectators, now retired with a sense of duty done.

Major Hopkins vainly searched for his beloved Thomas. Of all his sympathizing(!) searchers Mait was the most active. His innocent face never betrayed his knowledge, not even when he sweetly sang: "He'll never come back any more."

All the dwellers on Point Vivian heartily though secretly rejoiced and the waters of the beautiful St. Lawrence kept the secret.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TRIP THROUGH PARADISE.

It is Saturday night, August 8th, and the river is grandly illuminated by fireworks and lanterns.

The St. Lawrence is crowded by hundreds of excursionists for the wonderful flashlight excursion.

The flashlight darts hither and thither like a glittering will-o'-the-wisp, changing the foliage into a richer green, the river into a transparent emerald.

It lights up Bonnie Castle, the tall, stately towers of Castle Rest (Pullman's), White Castle (Browning), with silvery, moonlight radiance. They are like fairy castles, rising from an enchanted river.

The immense hotels, the Crossman, Thousand Island and the Frontenac (Round Isle), are decorated with festoons

of colored lanterns in quaint designs, sparkling and scintillating like rare jewels.

The Lotus Club burns red fire, which casts a vivid light on its manly occupants. Camp Phun and grim Hiawatha Castle send forth gay rockets.

The handsome, massive Warner cottage and cottages innumerable send forth salutes. Beautiful yachts glide about in the brilliant light like dainty birds.

The air is filled with sweetest music. It is like a vision from "Arabian Nights" or a picture from fairyland.

"That is Devil's Oven," said Lennox, pointing to a small island with an underground cave. "A man once took refuge there during the Revolutionary War, and his daughter took him provisions in a boat. Only a small rowboat can enter."

"What a lovely place," said Janet, "this large island. The grounds are smooth as velvet with flowers and shrubbery. The house is embowered in woodbine."

"That is Alleghany Point," said Flor-

ence, "where Reggie Laney lives, Mait's chum."

"An Englishman?" asks Ashton. "Yes, I thought they looked trim and neat like English grounds."

"Oh! you conceited specimen," thought Florence. "How I dislike him. There is such an air of reserved mystery about him."

"This is magnificent, bewitching, is it not?" said Janet.

"Quite pretty," said Ashton coolly; "but it lacks our picturesque old castles to be perfect."

Janet looks up indignantly. "The way your countrymen patronize our scenery is absurd," she said severely. "I fancy our modern cottages are more comfortable than your ancient, stately castles."

Ashton laughs softly. "No one would question your patriotism," he said. "America is a beautiful country."

"Indeed it is," said Janet; "give us time and we will have our stately castles, too."

“St. Lawrence, with its thousand islands, well deserves the title of the ‘American Venice,’ ” said Ashton; “it is the loveliest spot on this continent.”

“You have traveled a great deal?” asked Janet.

“A little; three years in America, three at home.”

“Please tell me about it.”

“Le Vere and I first took a yachting tour on the Mediterranean. I wish you could see it—clear, blue water with lovely, isles and grottoes. Then to Pompeii and Herculaneum. Elegant palaces, rich carvings and paintings, covered with the ashes of desolation. We climbed Vesuvius and looked down into the huge crater full of red fires like some witch’s cavern. Then on to Rome, to the wild, gay carnival. Queer, fantastic figures, kings, queens, clowns, fairies, witches—like children on a holiday, laughing, jesting, coquetting. The poorest peasant may be a king once if he have the where-with-all to buy a costume.”

“How pleasant it must be to travel,”

said Janet, her eyes sparkling with pleasure at his entertaining talk.

"Yes," he said, "I wish you might see England. You think we are proud, conceited, stiff, our homes uncomfortable. I wish you might see my home, Ashton Ma"—he stopped suddenly. His face crimsoned.

"How strange," thought Janet, "that he always avoids speaking of home or his family."

"Have you read 'Ben Hur'?" she said, pitying his embarrassment.

"Yes, and like it," he said. "The author has a wonderful descriptive power, is a vivid word painter."

"Yes," said Janet, "its author divinely portrayed a divine hero. How grand it must be to possess a genius, like Lew. Wallace's, to write a book like that, so pure, so grand, as to become an inspiration for higher, better living for centuries to come."

"Talent, genius, is a grand possession," said Ashton. "Le Vere is a genius in music and art, and so modest."

“Yes,” said Janet, “if I only possessed a small talent—some gift that would give pleasure to others—how glad I would be. But I have none,” mournfully; “I love music, but cannot play a note. Pictures too, but I never could draw a straight line.”

“Perhaps you never persevered,” he said, “in drawing.”

“Yes,” merrily. “For many days I worked faithfully on a fish, and thought it a triumph of art. My drawing master coolly said he was glad I had labeled it, else he would have taken it for a boot-jack.”

They both laughed merrily.

“That lovely cottage is Calumet,” he said; “the owner is Mr. Emory, who made all his wealth in tobacco.”

“Surely he can smoke the pipe of peace now,” said Janet, “with such a lovely home.”

“That is Fairyland, home of Mr. Hayden, and most rightly named,” said Ashton. “Miss Douglas,” abruptly, “you are different from any American girls I have ever met.”

“How so?”

“You inspire confidence. You are so sincere. Most of the girls we meet have one ambition—to marry a title.”

“Mr. Ashton,” said Janet indignantly, “you are not fair. There are a few heiresses who prefer titles, but only a *few*. The noblemen are very thankful, I notice, to replenish their empty pockets by marrying American heiresses.”

He smile blandly. He was only testing her. “I beg pardon, Miss Douglas, I do not include *you* in that speech.”

“Mr. Ashton, I am an American,” she said with dignity, “and I resent such views as that. There is not a country in the world where girls are as independent, self-reliant and womanly as here.”

“I grant you that, willingly. But why do so few *marry*, as in the Eastern States especially?”

“Because, as a teacher once answered, ‘they do not care to give up a forty-dollar position for a *ten-dollar man*.’ ”

Ashton laughed.

“They are right. Then *you*, Miss

Douglas—pardon the question—would not marry any man for his title alone?”

He regarded her curiously. “Shall I tell her my secret? Would she ever forgive me?”

“The title would make no difference to me,” she said; “it would depend upon the man. I would rather earn my own living always than marry a man for *his title alone*, or money *either*.”

“Will and your friend seem very happy,” he said. “Do you believe in love at first sight?”

“In some cases.”

“What, may I ask?”

“Love at first sight of a—bonnet—a dress.”

“Ah!” he said in disgust, “you are laughing at me. Do you believe in love at all?”

“I do not know. I have never had any experience. Do you?” mischievously.

“No; only as a calm, reasonable affection.”

“Why?”

“Because man is a reasonable being.

Love is a delirious fantasy, in which the heart conquers the brain. When a man falls in love he loses his reason, judgment."

"I dislike that phrase falling in love," said Janet, "as if one was unable to *help it*. People *who fall in* love usually *fall out*."

"Yes," said Ashton, "hence unhappy marriages, whereas, if reason alone was guide all would be well. I can respect, admire, but love," shrugging his shoulders, "leave that for boys. When a man falls in love he magnifies all good qualities till they become grand, heavenly. He is blind to all defects. He marries an illusion. He finds his idol is clay. Then comes incompatibility of temper. The lawyers and divorce courts pocket the fees, and that is the end. Reason should rule all."

"I don't agree with you at all," said Janet warmly. "*Reason* where personal pleasure alone is considered is *selfishness*."

"How about the feminine side. Are they never disappointed?"

“Reason *alone* never performed grand, heroic deeds. *Reason alone* did not cause Christians to suffer the horrible tortures of the inquisition cheerfully rather than betray their Master or their friends.”

“Why, then, is marriage a failure?” he asked.

“It is not when rightly understood. Love is a *divine* sentiment; marriage, its *sacred* fulfillment,” she said earnestly. “Where there is real love there will be mutual forbearance.”

“I wish every one had your ideas,” he said. “I beg your pardon, Miss Douglas, if I have offended by that unlucky speech. I have a secret to tell you. I hope you will *listen mercifully*.”

Ashton's pale face flushed, his eyes were brilliant with hope, sympathy, and another emotion. He bent his head. His lips moved. In another second his secret would have been revealed. Quick footsteps were heard, a gay laugh, and Mary Baron stood gazing archly at them.

CHAPTER XIII.

ASHTON'S MYSTERY.

"ARE you making love, too, like every one else?" said Mary sweetly.

"Do you judge us by yourself?" said Ashton, shrugging his broad shoulders.

"Oh! how naughty you are," said Mary playfully. "Dear Janet, how bored you look."

Ashton's pride was stung. Had he bored her?

"I have had a delightful time," said Janet; "so your idea is wrong."

"Bless my soul!" said a loud voice. "Lord Ashton, you here?—such a surprise!"

A stout, florid Englishman advanced. Ashton shook hands stiffly, his face white as marble.

Mary is listening intently.

"When I left your place, Ashton Manor, your mother said——"

"Excuse me a second," said Ashton. "Miss Douglas, will you pardon me if I leave you for a few moments?"

"Certainly."

Ashton walked off with his friend.

"So your friend is traveling in disguise," said Mary sweetly to Le Vere.

"Absurd," said Le Vere, flushing slightly.

"Come, tell us all about it," she said persuasively. "I will never tell."

"I have nothing to tell," he said coldly.

Ashton joined them. "Where is your friend?" asked Mary.

"He left at the Park," he said.

"There is a mystery," she thought, "and I will solve it. How handsome he is, what grand manners; I will win him yet. Mr. Ashton, will you please find me a seat in the bow of the boat?"

"Certainly." He offered his arm to Janet and then to her, a move which pleased Le Vere immensely.

"You must have thought it strange my leaving you so abruptly," he said in a low tone.

"Oh! no," she said; "it was an old friend, I saw."

"She is perfectly indifferent," he thought bitterly; "why should I care?"

But he did. Miss Baron talked incessantly.

Janet could not have found a loophole for talk if she had tried. But she did not try. She was completely absorbed in the enchanting scene.

Among the Canadian isles were row-boats filled with a gay picnic party. The drops of water as they fell from the oars were like liquid pearls. The Island Wanderer passed, brilliant with lights, gay with people. Berne Lighthouse gleamed like a star in the waste of waters. The air was filled with the wonderful light, which was like a magic spell, transforming every object into beauty indescribable. It fell like a soft halo on Janet's slender figure and clasped hands. It spiritualized the pale face, the

earnest gray eyes, the dark brown hair. Her heart rose and fell with the soft, dreamy music.

“Oh, Robert! if you were only here,” she mused, “I would ask no greater happiness. If your eyes might only gaze with mine on this exquisite beauty; your dear voice speak to me—all would be perfect. And to think you lived so nobly, so grandly; toiled hard, suffered and died, and never beheld this beautiful river.”

“She looks like the Lily of Astolat to-night,” thought Ashton; “but how she has suffered. It is only in repose her face is sad. Why is it she fascinates me so?”

CHAPTER XV.

ETHEL'S WARNING.

"I do not like that Mary Baron," said Ethel one afternoon, as they sat on the upper veranda. "She is a treacherous, deceitful girl, and she will certainly make you trouble."

"How can she?" asked Janet.

"Breaking up your friendship with Ashton," said Ethel. "She chases after him all the time. Every time he calls on you she follows," said Florence; "so he has to escort her home. She calls on you every day and professes the most devoted affection. She is only trying to cut you out. Don't think me jealous, Janet," said Ethel, "but I can't bear to see you imposed on."

"If she craves his society let her have it," said Janet. "I shall not raise my little finger to prevent her. Besides, Mr.

Ashton and I are only friends. Mary seems fond of me. Girls, you misjudge her. She is a bright, kind-hearted girl.'

"Janet! Janet! I wish you would give her up. Don't have her prying into your affairs," said Ethel.

"I don't like Ashton," said Florence, "he is so conceited."

"But he is very intelligent and gentlemanly, said Janet.

"His manners are all right," said Florence, "but he is so reserved."

"He never speaks of his family," said Ethel.

"Perhaps he has not any worth speaking of," said Florence sarcastically. "The way he patronizes our lovely scenery is absurd. I wonder if a dynamite explosion would shake his lordly composure?"

"Here comes your guardian. Don't tell her about our masquerade costumes. Excuse us."

They vanished. "My dear Janet," said Mary sweetly, "are you all ready for the masque to-night. What will you wear? I will never tell."

Janet showed her the dainty Amy Robsart dress with white domino.

"Oh! how lovely! and what will the other girls wear?"

"I promised not to tell any one," she said. "You know we each represent a character from a novel, and the fun will be to guess the identity."

"Yes, I am Di Vernon. Ethel and Florence don't like me," she said mournfully. "I am an orphan, all alone, and I feel it." There were tears in the dark eyes.

Janet's heart was touched. "But I am your friend," she said gently.

"Then if you care for me," said Mary, "I shall not mind the rest. You will always be my friend, won't you?" tenderly; "that comforts me so. I cannot bear to be separated from you an hour."

Janet felt reproached for her slight vexation.

"Note for you," said Reggie.

"All right. May I read it?" asked Janet.

"Certainly."

Mary watched her jealously while she read it.

“MISS DOUGLAS: May I have the pleasure of taking you for a row to Nobby Isle at three this afternoon? Please don't refuse; I have something of importance to tell you. Will call at three.

“DUDLEY ASHTON.”

Some one called Janet downstairs.

Mary quickly opened the note, read it twice. “Ah! fortune favors me again.” She listened, then quickly opened the wardrobe door, where the party dresses hung.”

“I must go now, dear,” she said as Janet returned; “you will be the belle.”

She met Ashton, looking very handsome and neat in his boating suit. “Good afternoon, Miss Baron,” he said pleasantly.

“How do you do,” she said sweetly. “I am so sorry to tell you that Janet cannot possibly go boating.”

“Why not?” vexedly.

"Well! of course, you must know she is just engaged to a lawyer in Albany and feels rather agitated."

Ashton turned white. Why had she not told him? He forgot they were never alone any more.

"So," she said sweetly, "your important business will have to wait."

He felt disgusted. Did Janet, whose reserve he had admired, tell her girl friends everything, after all?

"Well!" he said coolly, "will you take a trip with me?"

"Certainly," she said gayly, and proved a very pleasant companion. She had gained her point.

"I will see her to-night, and she will explain," Dudley thought. "Miss Baron looks very pretty in that pink dress."

Meanwhile, Janet waited until six o'clock. But her knight did not appear, nor any excuse. "He wanted to tell me his secret," she thought. "Is he a nobleman in disguise for fear of American heiresses? Mary always interrupts."

Reggie rushed in. "Cracky, you ought to see Mary out rowin' with that English swell."

Janet kept her own counsel. Why had he taken Mary after she had accepted? It was the first rude act she had ever known him to do. "He shal apologize and learn I am not to be trifled with."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NOVEL MASQUERADE.

So she laughed and talked gayly as they donned their pretty dresses for the novel masquerade at the Frontenac, Round Island.

It was a private party, one hundred guests, and Mrs. Chadwick and Mrs. Lennox were their chaperones.

The spacious parlors of the Frontenac were fragrant with the scent of the flowers, sweet with the strains of the orchestra.

Exquisitely dressed ladies and courtly cavaliers in novel costumes of centuries past trod the stately minuet. Kings, queens, Meg Merriles, pages, clowns, Rob Roy, Leicester, Tresillian, etc., all mingled together like a carnival. All wore masks. Sir Walter Raleigh searched diligently for his queen. There

she was—a stately figure with the pink rose on her shoulder. “Fair Queen,” he said softly, “how fares it with you?”

“Right merrily, Sir Knight,” said an assumed voice.

“The affairs of state are heavy,” he said; “will your majesty deign a waltz with me?”

“Right willingly.”

They glided gracefully over the floor until tired, and seated themselves in a cozy nook.

“Ethel, darling, you knew me at once.”

“Yes. How recognized you me?”

“By the pink rose on your shoulder.”

“Darling, when will you be my wife? Do not keep me in suspense.”

“I cannot marry you,” she said coldly.

“Ethel, you are joking,” he said, amazed.

“Not at all,” she said curtly. “I am engaged to Mr. Bell; have been for a year.”

“What!” Will exclaimed, horrified, “after all your vows to me? Why did

you deceive me? Ethel, take off that mask. Let me see your face. You cannot mean it."

"I do mean it."

"Ethel, are you mad, utterly heartless?"

"Call it what you will," she said, "I care not. Mr. Lennox, you have made a fine cavalier all summer. You have amused me. It would have been dull without some one."

"Miss Schuyler, is a man's love such as mine utterly worthless?" His face was white as death, drawn with suffering. "Do you know this will spoil my life? Have you no pity, no remorse?"

"None whatever." She laughed mockingly and left.

Will was stunned, bewildered. Was this heartless creature his sweet, unselfish Ethel. What cruel fate had changed her?

His noble manhood revolted and writhed in agony. He would never speak to her again.

The music, the lights and gayety

whirled before him like a hideous nightmare. He laughed and jested gayly with all, but no one guessed the cruel pain he suffered.

Lord Leicester was talking to Amy Robsart.

“Janet, why did you refuse the boon I craved?”

“Because, my lord, I was engaged with affairs of importance. I am about to take a voyage. See?” She held out a ring—a pearl set with garnets.

Lord Leicester’s heart grew cold. “Why did you not tell me?” he said reproachfully.

“Because,” frankly, “I thought you might propose first. But you are like all Englishmen, slower than molasses in January, conceited as Sullivan. Yes, I’m going to marry a rich man. I wasn’t sure I would catch him till now. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, you know!”

Had the whole world gone crazy? Was ever such an outrageous speech made before to mortal man? What a

mercenary creature? He had merely been used as a cat'-spaw. His pride was stung.

"I thought you preferred independence?" he said sarcastically.

"I said so, didn't I? It sounded well. I learned it from a book. We girls often do that." Her voice was shrill.

Had he made a mistake. No, there was the white domino, the blue bow.

"Janet," he said gravely, "is this really you or some one else?"

"It is I," she said airily; "how about your secret."

"That you shall never know," he said firmly. "I trusted, believed in you once. Now it is over."

"Don't make a scene," she said scornfully. "Don't speak to me again; you bore me to death with your precise, conceited ways."

"Never will I speak to her again," he mused with outraged pride and anger.

"Florence, why do you avoid me?" asked Ivanhoe of Rebecca. "I haven't danced with you once. And you have

talked with that conceited ape, Elliott (The Clown) all the evening. Will you give me this waltz?"

"No, I will not," said Rebecca decidedly. "Elliot is not an ape nor half as conceited as you are. You needn't dictate to me."

"Florence, I beg pardon," said Ivanhoe humbly. "I was cross."

"I am sick of being tied down," she said. "You are good, John, but too slow. Our engagement had better end."

John was petrified. "Not that," he said earnestly. "I will try to please you more."

"You can't do it," she said impatiently. "I like city fellows better. Elliot's manners are elegant."

This was too much. John had once been very jealous of the gay collegian. It all came back.

"You are tired of me?" he said slowly.

"Yes."

"Elliot," he said wrathfully, "a butterfly, a dude, whose brains are all in his necktie, or the cut of his coat. Very

well, I wish you joy of him. I don't deserve such treatment. You should ask my pardon, Florence."

"Pardon," she sneered. "I'll die before I speak to you again."

John's head was dizzy and confused. He would not pine for her. So he devoted himself to a pretty widow (Queen of Scots).

The clock strikes twelve. The masks are removed, amid gay laughter over mistaken identities. The grand promenade begins and the motley crowd files out to the supper room.

Rebecca, Queen Bess and Amy Robsart look exquisitely lovely in their quaint costumes. Three sore hearts notice them, but pass coldly by—faithless Lord Leicester with triumphant Di Vernon; Sir Walter Raleigh escorts a bewitching fairy queen; Ivanhoe, Mary, Queen of Scots.

Mrs. Lennox and Mrs. Clifton are amazed, the girls indignant. There are many dominoes like theirs, but each had told their knights the distinguishing

mark. Now their faces proved their identity. There could be no mistake.

“What ails those fellows?” muses the handsome Count of Monte Cristo (Le Vere), “to deliberately neglect their lady loves? Are they crazy? Can’t Ashton see through Miss Baron’s maneuvers? Where is his reason?”

He gracefully offers his arm to Amy Robsart. Queen Bess accompanies Columbus on a voyage of discovery to the supper, and Rebecca and the merry Harlequin follow Janet.

Ethel and Florence are surrounded by admirers all the evening. Never have they been so gay, witty and entertaining as to-night. Never have their hearts been so sore.

Will, with pale set face, watches Ethel as a mortal might gaze despairingly, hopelessly on the paradise he has lost. He has been surrounded by beautiful, cultivated girls all his life. Yet Ethel is the only one he has ever loved. He chose her from all.

Ethel does not possess “the liquid

orbs, the finely-chiseled features, the classic outlines" of novel heroines. But she is charming, fascinating, attractive, with nobility of soul.

Her clear, gray eyes reflect purity, unselfishness, intellect. Her manner is well bred, refined. Her slender figure is becomingly arrayed in a rich, rose colored brocade (an heirloom from a fair ancestress). She wears a high ruff of dainty lace. Her dark brown hair is coiled gracefully around the stately head. A bunch of lovely roses is at her girdle. Her cheek has a rosy flush. She is jesting merrily with Lord Cromwell, who listens devotedly. Columbus, Mark Antony, Charles IX., Robert Bruce are among her courtiers, eager to please her royal majesty.

"Surely she cannot be heartless, with such a face as that," poor Will thinks. How eagerly they had looked forward to this novel affair. "Novel, indeed," thinks Will bitterly. "Pandora must have opened her box, and filled the air with mischievous imps."

He has tried to be gay all evening. He can endure it no longer.

"Mother," he said softly, "let us go home. I cannot bear this cruel farce any longer."

"My son," she said tenderly, "what is it?"

"Nothing, mother," he said bitterly. "Ethel is engaged to some one else. I have only amused her."

"What!" she said in horror. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, she told me so. Don't blame her. I did not suit her."

Will, her noble, idolized son, trifled with, deceived! She had thought Ethel worthy of him. His face is drawn with mental pain, white as snow.

"My son, we will go," she said gently. And they quietly departed.

Ethel's heart throbs with cruel pain. He cares for her no more. This is the end of all the delightful summer days, the happy, careless life! Will this wretched evening never end? She would like to be alone to shriek aloud in agony.

All the Schuyler pride of past generations comes to her aid. "He shall never know I cared, or the world," and the poor queen, like many other royal namesakes, laughs and jests with all.

Society is a mirror which reflects our disposition. If we are gay, it smiles—if sad, better remain at home. Lock the grim skeletons in their closets that they intrude not at the feast. Cover over the sadness, the grief with beautiful, ethereal flowers of talk, jest, laughter.

Mary is brilliant—happy. Ashton is devoted to her. That is sufficient. She thinks of no one else.

Florence's rich dress lights up the arch, pretty, brunette face. The Harlequin is very devoted. She is gayety itself apparently.

"She cares for no one but that addlepated idiot," thinks Ivanhoe bitterly; "how can she be so heartless?"

With masculine inconsistency he becomes equally devoted to pretty Queen of Scots.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SERPENT IN EDEN.

THEY sail home on the St. Lawrence in the early dawn. The play is over; the curtain has fallen, the lights are out. They may keep restless vigils till the hour for rising approaches. Point Vivian is like an earthly Paradise—a bit of Eden, but the serpent has entered in.

Mrs. Chadwick determines to give John a lecture on duty, but he does not appear.

Ethel and Florence send back their engagement rings. The breach widens. The girls keep their own counsel. They never mention their recreant knights. They never speak to them when they meet.

Elliott and Florence, Janet with Le Vere, Ethel and Mortimer (Lord Cromwell) constantly attend parties, picnics, excursions. They are gay, lively.

Mrs. Clifton is angry with John; Mrs. Lennox, proud, resentful toward all. The neighborly visits between Rose Terrace and the Chadwick Cottage cease.

Night after night Mrs. Lennox hears Will pacing restlessly on the veranda. She dare not speak to him about his trouble. His pride is as strong as hers. He has been cruelly hurt. Yet he loves Ethel still. If she were free he would not give her up—no earthly power could make him.

Ashton is Mary's devoted cavalier. She soothes his wounded vanity. She praises him for all he does.

"He does not bore her," Ashton thinks bitterly. He could forgive anything but ridicule.

Three weeks of miserable doubt pass by.

Janet at first missed her attentive cavalier. There had been a strong intellectual bond. Their different views had added spice to long confidential talks. His secret seemed destined to oblivion.

At first Le Vere had held aloof. But when Ashton did not return to her he became her friend.

His keen, sympathetic nature divined her grief under the cheerful exterior. His music, his pictures, his brilliant converse delight her.

They take long sketching tours to the lovely isles. Any time Ashton came back he would slip quietly aside. Janet did not mourn his defection. To her he was only a friend.

"Yes, I am going home to-morrow," said Janet.

"So soon?" said Le Vere regretfully.

"Soon?" she said gayly. "I have been here two months. This has been a beautiful summer."

Janet gazes at the shining river, the fleecy white clouds. How lovely Point Vivian is with its green, mossy nooks, its stately trees and huge boulders.

Le Vere picks up his sketch book. With quick, nervous fingers he outlines the pale face leaning against a huge, mossy tree. Her white dress is flecked

with sunshine, a bunch of green ferns are at her slender waist.

She looks up suddenly. "Why do you not paint a large picture of one of these lovely scenes?"

"Perhaps I will some time, but nothing I do satisfies me. I cannot reach the ideal."

"But your sketches are real—not artificial imitations."

"Thank you."

Her praise is more to him than all the honors, the fame he has won.

"Miss Douglas, I wish you could see the magnificent paintings in Paris, in Rome, Vienna. How you would enjoy the superb music in the cathedrals. You can feel, can understand."

His black eyes are brilliant, his cheeks scarlet with enthusiasm.

Janet shakes her head sadly. "Impossible for me. A castle in Spain would be more real."

"But you, too, may realize a castle in Spain."

"Oh! no. If Robert had lived I would

be content, perfectly happy, but now!" Her voice is unspeakably sad.

"Yes, I know," he said sympathetically. "Grief is the shadow over all."

To none other could she speak of her sorrow. "All summer this beautiful river, the exquisite scenery, the music and all have lacked his presence alone to make it perfect. It has seemed like an opiate, which deadens the severe pain but does not entirely relieve it."

"Yes," he said gently, "the dull ache is there. I often wonder you can be so interested in all."

"But I must be—I should die if I stopped to think of it—all the time. I beg pardon for troubling you, Mr. Le Vere," she said. "I am very selfish."

"No," he protested. "Will you let me get you some of that silver birch?"

She rose quickly—her foot slipped. She would have fallen down the steep bank had not Le Vere quickly sprung forward.

Just one moment he held her in his strong arms. His pulse beats madly.

Why should he not win her? Ashton had deliberately chosen Mary.

He is not a saint or a hero. He loves this pale, quiet girl with all the intensity of a strong, passionate nature. Why should he give her up? His heart throbs fiercely.

Her touch thrills him like an electric shock. If he might only have the right to hold her in his strong arms, to cover the pale face with tender kisses. But honor, inherited from a long line of brave Spanish ancestors, forbids. With iron will he conquers.

"You are not hurt?" he said gently.

"Oh! no, only a little startled. So foolish of me to forget that steep place." She trembles like a leaf.

His dark eyes have a strange, unfathomable look.

He makes a dainty book of the silver birch and paints pretty scenes thereon.

"How cozy you are," said her guardian Mary, appearing. "My dear Janet, I have something to tell you. Oh! Mr. Le Vere," in pretended amazement.

“Don’t let me interrupt,” said he sarcastically. “Excuse me, Miss Douglas.” He departs.

“Yes,” said the wily Mary, “I am so happy. Ashton—Dudley says I am the only one he ever loved.” Her eyes are hard, relentless as they gaze at Janet.

“I congratulate you,” said Janet quietly. “He is a fine fellow. Will you have an early wedding?” She does not even change color or show any emotion. She is utterly indifferent.

May is keenly disappointed. She had hoped for surprise—genuine suffering.

“You are not angry?” she said. “I thought you might care for him yourself.”

Janet drew herself up haughtily. “Do you think I wear my heart on my sleeve for any man’s choosing? I must be sought—not the seeker.”

“What is that?” said Mary as a rustling overhead is heard. Nothing more is heard. She is keenly mortified. “Janet,” she said sweetly, “Le Vere is engaged to

Governor Morton's daughter; did you know it?"

"Indeed."

"Yes. He has won very high honors in music and art. His pictures bring immense prices. But he is an awful flirt—hard as flint. It's well you are unimpressible. Too bad you can't get him," maliciously.

"Such malice," thinks Janet. "The girls were right. She is malicious. Ashton is too good for her. Shall I tell him? Let his reason find her out."

CHAPTER XIX.

ADRIAN SOLVES THE PROBLEM.

“SOMETHING must be done,” Adrian threw his palette impatiently aside. “Two broken engagements—two friends estranged—ever since that novel masquerade. There must be a Judas in Eden. I believe it is Mary Baron. She has been scheming to interrupt everything. Those girls are charming, but proud as Lucifer. They would die sooner than ask an explanation. The men ditto. Love and common sense make happiness. Leave out either and it is like a dish without seasoning. Will is at the Bay—starts for Boston this afternoon; Dudley starts for England; to-morrow John for Germany. Once separated they may never meet again. I cannot see their lives spoiled. Janet will be free. Perhaps she might be mine.”

His heart throbbed with ecstasy. "No, Dudley loves her." He cannot betray his friend. His head is bowed. The struggle is long and bitter.

"We are our own Fates;
Our deeds are our doomsmen."

Deliberately, beyond recall he chooses his destiny. "Honor first." Will must come back, Dudley must be reconciled, and Janet made happy.

The steamer has gone. The next one will be too late. The thermometer is 98° in the shade, when you find it. The August sun is glaring on the water.

Resolutely he rows down to the bay. There is no time to lose.

"Halloo!" said Mait, hailing him on the way; "where you goin'?"

"Down to the Bay. Where are you bound for?"

"I was a-goin' fishin'," said Mait sadly, "but Mrs. Smith, the house-keeper, went on a tear and fell and busted herself."

"What!" said Adrian. The idea of

steady, sober Mrs. Smith going on a "tear" was too comical. He laughed merrily.

"You needn't laugh," said Mait; "she was going down the steps at Rose Terrace and her dress caught on the railin' and tore. She slipped all the way down and busted her ankle. If that ain't goin' on a tear I'll give up. "There hain't any one to home. Ethel's over there, and I'm waitin' for her."

Was ever fate more propitious?

"I'll send some one over," said Adrian. "Say, Mait, you go on fishing. I'll see Miss Schuyler gets home all right."

"Cracky! will you?" said Mait rapturously; "you're a brick. Here's Reggie. Hoop-la."

They go bounding over the waters in Reggie's sailboat, and Adrian proceeds to cut the Gordian Knot.

CHAPTER XX.

A FORTUNATE ACCIDENT.

POINT VIVIAN seemed asleep in the drowsy August afternoon—all but Ethel.

She was sitting in the hammock watching the shining ripples, the boats sailing to and fro. All the others had gone on an excursion to Kingston. She felt the reaction, after the constant gaiety, and refused to go.

It was very lovely here, but she was glad to leave it all to-morrow. "I shall never see Will again," she thought, her heart aching cruelly. "What have I done that he has acted so? Is he a flirt? He shall never know I care, not if it kills me."

"Ethel," said Mait excitedly, "Miss Smith has fallen off the steps and busted her an-i-kel. She's gro'nin' awful and

there hain't no 'one to home. The servants have all gone on a picnic, and Will's gone to Bosting."

"Gone without a word of farewell even! Should she go to Rose Terrace?" She had not crossed its threshold in many weeks. If Will had been home no power would have tempted her.

Humanity conquered. Mait took her over the river.

"Will nobody come?" wailed Mrs. Smith, at the foot of the steps.

"I am here," said Ethel kindly. "I am sorry you are hurt."

"I am so glad," said Mrs. Smith, relieved. "Mrs. Lennox is at the Bay. They won't any one be home till night."

Ethel bathed the swollen foot in hot water and bandaged it deftly.

"You are handy," said Mrs. Smith gratefully; "that is better. Now, if I can get up. It is so hot here."

"You must not stand on it," said Ethel; "let me help you."

Vainly she tried to help her up.

Two hundred pounds were more than she could raise.

"If Master Will was only home," said Mrs. Smith; "he is so strong."

"Thank fortune he is not," mused Ethel.

"Don't try, miss. They will be home in a few hours," and she sighed patiently.

Ethel raised her head and put soft cushions under her. She bathed the hot forehead; she soothed the nervousness caused by the fall.

Mrs. Smith fell sound asleep. The hot sun poured down upon her. She shielded her with a large umbrella. Her arms ached, her head grew dizzy as the long hours passed.

Still she sat patiently there, fearing to awaken her. Would they never come?

There was a soft footfall.

She turned, expecting to see Mrs. Lennox.

There stood Will with a ghastly, care-worn face.

Her head whirled. She was so amazed to see him.

"Good-afternoon," she said coldly.
"Mrs. Smith has had a fall."

"Yes."

"I could not get her in the house alone."

"I should think not," regarding her slender figure. "Where are the others?"

"Gone to a picnic. There was nobody here or I should not have come," Ethel said proudly.

Oh! the mortification for him to find her there.

"I thought you were in Boston."

"I changed my mind," said Will. "When did it happen?"

"At three."

"Now it is seven; you have sat here in this hot sun for four hours. Miss Schuyler, I am much indebted. I regret——"

"Master Will," said Mrs. Smith, waking, "I am so glad you are here. This lady has been so kind. The pain was awful. I guess I'd have died if she hadn't come."

William, the gardener, now appeared. Their united muscles assisted her into the house.

Ethel settled her comfortably in her own room with one of the maids who returned.

"She will be all right now, I think, Mr. Lennox," said Ethel politely, "so good-afternoon."

"You are tired, Miss Schuyler," said Will politely; "don't go until you are rested and have some refreshments."

Ethel felt as if she would suffocate. "Thank you, it is not necessary," she said.

"Then allow me to row you home?"

"Reggie or Mait will be here for me," she said politely.

She walked to the summerhouse.

CHAPTER XXI.

WILL CONQUERS FATE.

WILL follows her slowly. "She will not even accept a single courtesy from me," he thinks bitterly. "Fool that I was to come back for an explanation. She is utterly indifferent."

Mait is not visible. Ethel stands head proudly erect, gazing out over the river. Her face is white, emotionless. To be there so near him brought back all the happy days with cruel reality. The Schuyler pride is strong as the Lennox.

She can suffer tortures and give no sign. Are these two who love so devotedly to separate forever for the want of a few spoken words?

Will cannot bear it.

"Ethel," he exclaims, "what have I done that you should treat me so, that

you should break our engagement without remorse?"

She faces him proudly. "Will Lennox, I did not break our engagement until you treated me with the most unpardonable neglect. You simply amused yourself with me."

"Amused," he said bitterly. "Did you not tell me with your own lips at that miserable masque that you had simply amused yourself with me—that you would marry some one else?"

"Never," said Ethel; "you never spoke to me once, nor I to you."

"You wore?" he asked.

"The black domino, the pink rose."

"I don't understand," he said, dazed, "but I vow that I talked with a lady I took for you. Do you think I had no pride that I would speak after that?"

"Do you think I had no pride," said Ethel, "that I would endure such deliberate neglect?"

"Ethel, tell me," his voice shook with emotion, "are you engaged to any one?"

"No," she said sternly. "I never was to any one but you."

“Ethel, can you ever forgive me?” he said, folding her trembling figure in his arms in a passion of regret, unspeakable relief. “I have suffered an eternity of agony. Some one—a satanic spirit—wore your token, spoke those cruel words. I will find out if it takes for ever. I will never give you up.”

“What brought you back?”

“Le Vere. He rowed after me in a broiling hot sun—a burning sacrifice on the altar of friendship,” said Will. “Blessings on that fellow. To-morrow would have been too late.”

Ethel shuddered.

“Too late” has been the death knell of so many lives.

“Ethel, who is the traitor?”

“I do not know.”

“You suspect?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me, will you not?”

“I would rather not.”

“Mary Baron, I believe,” said Will, admiring the reserve which would not betray even an enemy. “There has been

trouble at the Point ever since she came. What is the matter with Dudley? He was devoted to Janet until that masque—and John to Florence.”

“I do not know. The web of fate was sadly tangled that night,” said Ethel.

“Yes,” said Will. “His Satanic Majesty had a glorious time mixing up matters.”

“Let us find out and make them all happy,” said Ethel, with characteristic unselfishness.

“With all my heart,” said Will warmly. “Mary is crazy after Dudley. The way she plots is ridiculous.”

“He likes it,” said Ethel, “the way he follows her about.”

“Beg pardon, she does the following,” said Will dryly. “Ethel, if it was her, I cannot forgive her for trying to spoil our lives. There is mother coming.”

“Mother,” he said joyously, “the mystery has been explained. This is the happy solution.”

Mrs. Lennox’s pride relaxed. Her boy was happy again. How different from

the pale, careworn face she had bidden adieu to that morning.

“Ethel,” she said graciously, “I am so glad; but what is that clinging to your dress?”

Will bent down. “It is the key,” he said amazed; “a good omen.”

He held it up, a quaint, massive gold key, tarnished with age.

“Ethel, unlock the cabinet, dear. It is yours,” said Mrs. Lennox.

“Where could it have come from after all these years?” said Will.

“It must have been in the shrubbery,” said Ethel, “and swept along with my dress.”

With trembling fingers she unlocked the queer cabinet. A magnificent diamond star lay there in a case of faded satin.

“Oh! how lovely!” she exclaimed.

“It is yours,” said Mrs. Lennox, smiling.

“Oh! no,” said Ethel, protesting.

“Yes, the finder of the key possess the contents, and——”

"And marries a Lennox," said Will gayly.

Ethel's eyes sparkled as she held the glittering star in her hand.

"Yes, Ethel, it is yours," said Mrs. Lennox. "May your future be as bright as this star."

"Thank you," said Ethel. "I hope I may deserve it. Poor Gabrielle!" she added, as the moonlight fell on the lovely sad face.

"Yes, poor indeed in earthly happiness," said Mrs. Lennox. "This lovely room has seen many a sad vigil. They found her one night—dead, sitting here, in front of Lionel's picture, hands clasped, a smile upon her face. The doctors truly said heart disease. She left her jewels to me, but the star, an ancient heirloom, could not be found, nor the key."

They speak softly, reverently.

The Rose Window gleams like an immense ruby. The room is filled with the odor of rose leaves, dead and lifeless as its beautiful owner. Her shadowy pres-

ence fills the Rose Room with memories of hopeless sorrow.

The green waters are tipped with silver as Will and Ethel row homeward. All the earth is glorified, transfigured, a vision of Paradise to them.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAIT COMES TO THE RESCUE.

JOHN was moodily smoking a cigar in the Rose summerhouse.

Dudley was pacing restlessly up and down, a new fashion for his quiet nature.

Adrian was evidently meditating.

"Where was Florence?" John wondered; "flirting with that ape *Elliott*, *probably*, her piquant face smiling back at his devoted one. Forgetting his very existence. I won't speak first," he mused, "not if I die."

"Rats!" he exclaimed suddenly, pitching his cigar over the railing.

"Where?" asked Adrian dryly.

John passed hastily down the Cedar Avenue.

"What ails that fellow?" said Dudley sharply; "he used to be a sociable chap. Now he is as solemn as an owl."

"Something on his mind," said Le Vere dryly.

"I should judge so. All the Americans seem to have. They can't be still a minute—jerking, twisting as if on wires or nettles. Why can't they sit still like——"

"You are doing," said Le Vere dryly.

Dudley stopped. He was just as restless as any American.

"Looks like a thunderstorm," said Adrian.

"Wish it would," said Dudley, regaining his pace, "the air is oppressive."

"Seems to affect even your clear brain," said Adrian. "What is the matter, old man?"

"Nothing," said the "old man" shortly.

"Dudley," said Adrian gently, "we have been schoolmates together, confidential friends. You are restless, unhappy. What has Miss Douglas done to you?"

"You shall not pry into my secrets," said Dudley wrathfully; "leave me alone. You have been her devoted

admirer. You made up for any lack on my part. Go on trying to win her."

Adrian's black eyes flashed. His quick, passionate temper rose within him at such injustice.

"Ashton," he said quietly, "you do me wrong. At the masque you deliberately neglected her. How could you expect she would overlook it?"

"Wait," said Dudley bitterly, "and listen. That day I asked her to go boating. She refused. At the ball she told me she was engaged—showed me her ring; said she despised Englishmen; that I bored her to death. Do you think any man with a spark of self-respect would speak to her again?"

"She said that?" said Adrian horrified; "never! Miss Douglas is a lady and could utter no such speech as that."

"Who was it, then?" sarcastically; "a spirit?"

"Yes, an evil one."

"Go to her," said Le Vere; "ask for an explanation."

"Never," said Ashton. "Do you think I have no pride?"

"To-morrow," mused Adrian, "he leaves for England. He is obstinate. If I let him go, the way is clear."

With all his strong nature he longed to win Janet. Why should he try to urge Ashton?

"I thought you liked her," said Ashton. He met Adrian's dark eyes.

"I beg your pardon, Ade," he said, offering his hand. "I have been infernally jealous of you. You could play and sketch and talk with her and I could not even speak. Do you think"—eagerly—"there could have been a mistake?"

"I am sure," said Adrian, "some one fooled Lennox, broke him all up, and made trouble that night. Go to her and ask. Every one has a right to defend himself. She would never speak like that. She is not engaged, has never worn any ring."

"Miss Baron said she was."

"You believe her!" said Adrian disdainfully. "If you prefer her, don't go."

"Prefer," said Dudley. "I am sick of her." He hesitates.

His pride has been sorely hurt. Ridicule is a sharp axe. But love is stronger. It is the first time he has ever been humbled. "I will go," he said, his blond head proudly erect.

"Oh! I say," said Mait, rushing in, "Ashton, are you goin' to marry Mary Baron?"

"Not if I know it," said he warmly.

"She told Janet so, and said Le Vere was engaged to a governor's daughter."

"Of all consummate, combined impudence," said Ashton, collapsing into a chair.

"Any more remarks, young man?" said Le Vere dryly.

"A lot more 'bout wasn't Janet sorry she couldn't get either of you, and Janet said she didn't run after no fellers. I was up in that big tree, after a crow's nest, an' most tumbled down on her head. She'd had a fit. Cracky! Janet didn't know I was up there, neither."

"Young man, you are a firstclass brick," said Dudley; "what can I do for you?"

"I want a gun-n, a sailboat and two pistols and a toy cannon, and there's a bully circus down to the Bay," said Mait modestly.

Dudley stared in amazement, then laughed.

"Hold on," he said, "I cannot order out all the military stores at once."

CHAPTER XXIII.

FLORENCE AND JOHN.

"BUT you and Reggie shall go to the circus."

"Oh! Cracky!" said Mait, whirling round in somersaults, "hain't that bully. I must tell Reggie," and off went the hero who had come to poor Romeo's relief.

"What's the matter? A crazy hop?" said John sarcastically.

"The traitor has been found, I think," said Le Vere. "John, go and make up with Florence at once. It's all a mistake."

"I have been an utter idiot," said Ashton.

"Here's another," said John, after they told Mait's revelation.

In a few minutes John reached Point Vivian.

Florence, sad and wretched, was all alone in the moonlight. To-morrow John went to Hamburg. They would never meet again. "Very well," she thought proudly, "let him go. I don't care. I shall not break my heart for any man." She was tired of Elliott; he was getting too devoted.

"Florence," said John, appearing.

She started suddenly. He was pale, haggard, forlorn. He loved her still, she knew.

"Florence, I can't stand this any longer," he said. "Why did you say you would never speak to me?"

"I never said so," she said, amazed.

"Nor that you preferred city fellows; that I was too slow?"

"Never. John Morton, are you crazy or dreaming?"

"Neither one. Why did you flirt with that empty-pated idiot, Elliott?"

"Elliott's head has no vacant rooms to let, Mr. Morton," said Florence with dignity; "he is my friend. Be careful how you speak."

John bites his dark mustache.

"Where, Mr. Morton, did you hear these novel remarks?"

"At that wretched masque at the Frontenac. May I be switched if I ever attend another."

"I never spoke to you then—you did not come near me," said Florence coldly. "Don't try to find an excuse for your neglect."

"Florence," said John earnestly, "I solemnly declare I talked with a lady I took for you, who wore the black domino, the scarlet bow, and who said what I told you."

Florence could not doubt his sincerity. She had known him too long as an honorable, truthful man.

"Then who was the missing link?" she said slowly.

"Satan only knows," said John. "Lennox was fooled; has just made it up. Very well, if you don't believe me, I never stay where I am not wanted. I shall go to Hamburg, catch the cholera likely;" he turned away, wounded and

heartsick. "What would you care?" bitterly.

Visions of John, dying in some foreign land of that horrible cholera were too much for Florence.

"Don't go, John," she said softly.

"Do you care, after all?" he said.

Her black eyes are tender, brilliant; her arch face irresistibly bewitching. The cruel doubt is over. John is gloriously happy.

They stand arm in arm on the cottage veranda. Suddenly there is a broad glare. The searchlight is full upon their radiant faces. Merry laughter goes up from the gay crowd on the Island Wanderer at their discomfiture.

"It is worse than a kodak," said John; "who cares? I don't. Just look at Gibbs?"

The mischievous light touches him.

He is dancing around
In his rose-colored gown,
A placard affixed to his manly back,
"For Sale—Special Bargain—Clear the Track,"

"Great Scott! Gibbs is sold," said John.

"Mait's work, I know," groaned Florence.

Gibbs shakes his fists at the laughing crowd, unconscious of the reason, and disappears in the Pepper Cup. He has a volcanic explosion when he discovers it, and fills the air with sulphurous remarks.

Mait would be well seasoned could he find him, but that guileless youth keeps out of his way.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ASHTON'S SECRET.

THE nightly transformation is taking place. Queen Titania and all the magicians have enveloped the St. Lawrence River in bewitching beauty. Earth has vanished. Fairy land exists.

The river is like a magnificent mirror reflecting the thousand exquisite isles, delicate ferns and leafy canopies.

Hill Crest, Isle Royal, Rose Terrace and Point Vivian are all ablaze with brilliant monograms, stars, anchors and quaint devices. Rockets are flying through the air, trying to rival the glittering stars. It is the usual Saturday night illumination.

"Well may it be called the American Venice," said Janet rapturously; "one can no more describe its beauty than the bloom of a rose or the perfume of a lily."

Surely grief should be laid to rest. Three years to-day since I gazed the last on his noble face. My heart cries out with bitter longing. I want him back."

Janet walks restlessly back and forth. The old sorrow so long repressed will not be silenced.

"Such a noble manhood. Why could he not have lived? So young—only twenty—to suffer and to die. Shall I ever forget that long year of agony, the daily struggle to be cheerful, knowing that he was doomed—that no power could save him? I would not mind any trouble if he could have lived. I must live for others. I am so weary of life."

"Miss Douglas, may I speak to you?" Ashton was pale as marble.

"Certainly," said Janet, surprised.

"Miss Douglas, there has been a mistake. Why did you refuse to go boating with me?"

"I did not," said Janet. "I waited until six."

"Miss Baron met me and said you declined," said Dudley amazed.

"I never told her you had invited me."

"I thought it queer if you did," said Dudley, relieved. "May I ask, Miss Douglas, are you engaged?"

"You have no right to ask," said Janet.

"No," he said humbly, "pardon me; but why did you tell me so at the masque at the Frontenac?"

"Mr. Ashton, I never spoke to you there all the evening," said Janet emphatically. "You must have been dreaming."

"Dreaming!" he said bitterly. "Have all these miserable weeks been dreams? I wish they had. That night of the masque a lady in white domino and blue bow, your costume, showed me her engagement ring. She said she despised Englishmen—would marry only for money."

"Can you describe the ring?" Janet asked.

"A pearl set with garnets."

"That was the ring Mary Baron had urged her to wear. 'You thought I was mercenary?'" said Janet.

"Yes, I believed your own words."

"Mr. Ashton, I do not possess a ring like that. I did not say one word to you that night. You doubted me; why are you here?"

"Why am I here?" Ashton's strong voice trembled with emotion. "Because I love you, Janet. Because I cannot endure this silence any longer."

Janet was amazed. She had never dreamed that this calm, deliberate man loved her.

"I was attracted to you irresistibly," he said slowly. "I have laughed at love, called it a delirious fantasy of the brain. I have fought against it, but I would give all I possess to win you. If I have offended you in any way, I humbly ask your pardon."

"Please do not," said Janet distressed; "it was all a cruel mistake."

"Janet, I am not worthy of you," he said earnestly; "but I would try to make you happy. You think me cold, selfish, absorbed. Janet, as my beloved wife, you should have every luxury, society,

travel. You might visit all the famous cities with their treasures of art. You should listen to the superb music your soul delights in. You may be lady of Ashton Manor, one of the most beautiful homes in England. I am very rich, Janet, for my secret is (I say it not to boast), I am Lord Ashton."

Janet was utterly amazed. His superior manners had indicated high position, but she had never dreamed of his title.

"Why this disguise?" she asked.

"It was foolish," he said, "but I dislike notoriety. I wished to travel quietly."

And they had thought him conceited. He, who was a nobleman in reality. His dark-blue eyes were filled with tenderness. He looked so noble, worthy of his title. What more could she desire? Affection, culture, wealth. She gazed on the sparkling emerald waters. Could they help her to peace or rest? "Mr. Ashton," she said softly, "I respect—I admire you, but I cannot marry you."

"Janet," he said passionately, "do not

tell me there is no hope. I cannot give you up. I will wait—in time, perhaps.”

“I fear not,” she said gently; “your love deserves more than the friendship I can give. The world is filled with lovable girls who are talented—better fitted than I for your high position.”

“Janet, no woman on earth could make me happy but you. Nothing is of value but you. I cannot bear to see you drudging your life away. Give me the right to take care of you, dearest.” His voice trembled.

Janet scarcely recognized the man, so earnest was his manner. “Pardon me,” he said, “but is there any one else?”

“No,” she said gently, “I do not care for any one. I do not think I ever will. My heart is dead, buried in Robert’s grave. The beauty of life has vanished for me.”

“Let me comfort you, Janet. In time you will forget.”

“Forget!” she said passionately; “if I only could. Time brings me no comfort. I worshipped, idolized him. He was so

noble, patient in suffering, heroic in resignation to death. I wake in the night with my arms stretched out to embrace him. My heart aches all the time for the sound of his voice."

Ashton's face was rigid with pain. Why must she suffer like this? "I wish we had never met," said Janet. "I am sorry to make you suffer."

"No," he said earnestly, "I shall be a better man for knowing you." He bowed his white, agonized face on his hands. When a strong nature gives way the suffering is intense. The ripples beat against the rocks like a funeral dirge. Janet's heart filled with pity.

Janet laid her hand on his arm. "Do not let me spoil your life. You can make so many people happy."

He raised a ghastly face. "It was not your fault. I may be your friend still. Yes, a true, steadfast one. If you change your decision you will let me know?"

"Yes."

"Or if there is any favor I can do for you?"

“Yes.”

“Miss Baron must be punished,” he said firmly.

“Will not her conscience be sufficient?”

“I do not think she owns such an article. I will make her confess to you.” He left Janet and walked slowly down the river path.

CHAPTER XXV.

[THE GUARDIAN CONFESSES.]

"My dear Janet," said Mary airily, "what are you making such a fuss over?" Mary looked very pretty in a rose-colored dress.

"I have not made a fuss," said Janet calmly.

"No, I am the one," said Ashton sternly. "You have made trouble for us all. Now it ends."

"Trouble?" said Mary. "Impossible."

"Miss Baron," he said sternly, "you assumed several parts at the last Frontenac masque."

"I?" she said innocently.

"Yes, you were the one who personated Miss Douglas, also Miss Chadwick and Miss Schuyler."

"Impossible; how could I?"

"You know best," he said. "You may as well confess how you did it."

Ashton's face was stern, relentless. Mary's black eyes read him aright. He despised, loathed her, and he loved Janet. Her sin had found her out. She could hurt him and she would.

"Well," laughing scornfully, "when dear Janet left the room I saw the costumes in the wardrobe. It was easy to imitate them and the love tokens. You poor fools were fooled. It was such a rare joke." She laughed defiantly, without regret.

"Who told you that I had asked Miss Douglas to go boating?"

"Janet."

"I did not," said Janet.

"Come," said Ashton sternly, "you opened the note, Miss Baron."

"Yes," defiantly, "I did."

"Your motive for these extraordinary maneuvers?"

"That is my affair." The black eyes fell before Ashton's scornful gaze.

"Miss Baron," he said sarcastically,

"you deserve a position on the diplomatic corps. Point Vivian is too small a stage for you."

She writhed under his remarks as under a lash.

"Your last engagement to me was a stroke of genius."

"Who had told him that?" Mary blushed a scarlet hue which felt like fire. "Janet Douglas," she said vindictively, "I hate you. I was your friend simply to make use of you. I wish I could hurt you, make you feel."

"Then your friendship was all pretense?" Janet was calm. All the pity vanished from her face. "You have hurt my very soul. I loved and trusted you once. You used me as a tool. You deliberately injured my friends. Has my life been so filled with happiness that you should deprive me of all pleasure?"

"We can be friends again," said Mary sullenly.

"Friends—never," said Janet. "Faith is dead. Without it friendship cannot exist."

Then Mary turned mockingly to Ashton. "Lord Ashton, I knew of your disguise. You love Janet, but her heart is marble."

Lord Ashton did not deign to reply.

"Florence and Ethel disliked me," said Mary, "but I made them suffer." Her passionate infatuation choked her voice. Dudley hated her. Slowly she walked down the path. They never saw her again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ADRIAN'S SACRIFICE.

THE dock house at Point Vivian is like a small edition of the Inferno, with the hot sun pouring down. A merry crowd are chatting gayly, waiting for the boat to Clayton.

Ashton is bound for London; Adrian to Spain; Mrs. Lennox and Will accompany Ethel to her home at Albany.

Janet remains a few days longer with the Chadwicks.

"Miss Douglas," said Ashton earnestly, "this has been a very pleasant summer to me. I shall never forget it; and if ever I can assist you in any way you will let me know?"

The sunlight falls on the noble, high-bred face.

"You will write to me?"

‘I think it would be better not to,’ Janet says gently.

He knows then there is no hope. His face quivers slightly. “As you will. God bless and keep you, Janet.”

Janet bows her head. It seems like a benediction. A rose, white, fragrant, falls from her belt.

“May I have it?”

“Yes.”

He touches it reverently. It is like her—pure, sweet, spotless.

“I will remember,” he said earnestly, “and try to make my life brighter for others.”

He touches her hand lightly and then joins the gay party at the dock. His face is calm. No one but Le Vere guesses the tumult in his heart.

Through all the long years that follow Janet is indelibly stamped on his memory. Her influence renders him kind, sympathetic to all around him.

“Miss Douglas, I am sorry the summer is over,” said Le Vere regretfully. “Take good care of yourself. Don’t let

those young cormorants devour all your vitality."

"Teaching is not so dreadful," said Janet. "I have had a perfect rest in this lovely place."

"I wish your life was different," said Le Vere. "Ashton is a noble fellow and has a beautiful home."

"Yes, I know." Janet flushes slightly.

Adrian is puzzled over her rejection. Few would have declined such brilliant prospects.

"I have learned a lesson," said Janet; "this beautiful river like your music, has comforted me and taught me that I must give up self-absorption. I must rise above it," she said, her face radiant, transfigured; "I will take every day and make the best of it."

Adrian's heart beats madly. How he loves this quiet, earnest girl.

He looks like a Spanish cavalier, with his brilliant eyes and graceful figure. His face is haggard. There are deep lines under his eyes.

Janet's keen intuition detects a

change. "You are working too hard, Mr. Le Vere," she said. "How is your picture getting on?"

"I wish," he said, "to paint a masterpiece that once seen, will never be forgotten, and I cannot do anything." His voice is hopeless, despairing. "I am like one whose soul is filled with divine harmonies, but whose unpracticed fingers make only discord among the keys."

"You must not be discouraged," said Janet; "you have done so well."

"Trifles," he said lightly. "When I look at the works of Titian and Raphael I am desperate. "Of course I cannot attain to their divine genius, but I cannot reach my own ideal."

"Tell me about it, please," said Janet.

Her sympathy draws him out as no one else can. "Mrs. Glendemming's story suggested it," he said slowly. "I wish it to be a woman's face, one who has loved, suffered the agony of renunciation; who has conquered, who is strong, sympathetic."

"Yes," said Janet, "like the poem:

“ ‘How grand the soul that has suffered deep,
 Been torn and bruised in the strife;
Yet still walks on, an angel of light,
 In the world’s broad field of life.’ ”

“Yes,” he said, “exactly my idea. Not a face of mere physical beauty, dependent on outline, on coloring; but a face spiritualized; the reflection of a noble soul of such marvelous loveliness that——”

“Yes,” interrupted Janet, “that all who saw it would be fascinated, inspired. Such a face would be indelibly impressed on one’s memory.”

“Your intuition is perfect,” said he. “Who can paint a soul?—the divine, intangible essence of life? As well try to paint the subtle perfume of a rose.”

“You can do it,” she said cheerily. “You possess the keen insight of a soul artist. No artist can paint an emotion he has not felt. I feel that you have known renunciation.”

How little Janet knew what that renunciation meant.

His eyes are fixed on Hill Crest. "Thank you," he said. "I inherit the wretched temper of the Don Garzos; am irritable, cross."

"Not cross," she said, "but tired. You work with enthusiasm, every nerve strained to highest tension. Reaction follows. You are depressed."

"You are kind," he said, "to think so."

"No, only just. Mortals cannot dwell forever on the heights of Olympus, among the gods. They must descend to earth."

The white flags wave. The St. Lawrence sails slowly in on waves of foam.

"Hurry, Adrian," calls Lennox.

"I will not say good-by, but *Auf wiedersehn*. If I can ever do anything for you, remember I will come if the ocean rolls between us."

He takes both hands in a lingering clasp. Spite of self-control the dark eyes are filled with unutterable love and longing.

Janet reads his secret with regretful pain.

“*Auf wiedersehn,*” she says; “success and honor.”

“Thank you;” his voice is full of repressed emotion.

He will not speak yet. Ashton shall still have a chance of winning her.

As one bidding an eternal farewell to the beloved dead, slowly, regretfully he turns away.

“Good-by, Mrs. Chadwick; your cottage should be called ‘View Perfection,’” he says gayly. “Mrs. Bennett, Mait will make a second Columbus. Phrenology must be revised to account for his bumps. I hope you will all visit my castle in Spain.”

“I’m awful sorry you swells are goin’,” said Mait. “Ashton, that circus was bully,” he added. “They had an awful smart man, could twist himself outside in and in side out. Old Gibbs won’t speck olate any more. Broke his specks takin’ a trip on a cord on his back stoop. So mad he’most busted himself. Who could have put that cord there?”

They all laugh at Mait’s innocent face.

The gang plank is thrown ashore, the passengers throng on.

Mait gives a wild whoop. They are off.

The three persons, whose lives were so strangely interwoven, separate.

Lovely Point Vivian, with its mossy glades, recedes. Ashton and Le Vere stand motionless, their eyes fixed on the woman they love so hopelessly.

Ashton muses: "Sophocles was right. 'Call no man happy till he is dead.' She bears her burden bravely. Can I do less?"

Adrian's face is rigid. "Poor Dudley. What a bright future Janet might have with him. If she could love a brother so devotedly, a lover she would idolize. She is not heartless, but the agony of death has swept all before it. Dudley shall have every possible chance to win her."

Adrian sets his lips firmly together. "She shall never know. I will conquer if it kills me."

The ripples seem to repeat the words:

“Hast thou chosen then?
Canst thou endure
The purge of frost—the calenture;
The sick recoil, the weary pain,
Of senses heightened,
Keener nerves and brain?
Suffer and love:
Love much, and suffer long,
And live though all,
And in the end be strong.”

Centuries ago there had been a Don Garzo, a Jesuit priest noted for learning, but cruel and relentless to his enemies. As a member of the Spanish Inquisition he would torture his victims with fiendish malice, never showing any emotion whatever. Adrian, with his intense, passionate nature, had inherited this iron will. He had tried to crush out his love for Janet rather than betray his friend.

No tortures of the Inquisition could have caused more excruciating pain than he experienced now. No Jesuit priest was more relentless than he in trying to destroy this love, entwined round every fiber of his strong nature.

"Adrian," calls Will, "I can never thank you enough for solving this mystery. You cut the Gordian knot with the blade of common sense."

"Don't mention it," said Le Vere gayly. "Mary Baron is fitted for the stage by her consummate acting."

"She went on the stage this morning," said Ashton, "home to Berryville."

"She played a masked game with three dominoes," said Ethel; "some people need a whole set."

"If only Janet was happy," mused Ethel. "Strange Le Vere or Ashton were not attracted by her."

"It is very queer, John," said Florence, as they sit in the twilight, "that Janet has no fate. Will Lennox should have fallen in love with her. If that sly Baron girl had not meddled Ashton might, in his calm reasonable way, have liked Janet."

So they all surmise, little dreaming of the tragedy that has been played.

Three years have passed. Ashton has nobly redeemed his promise to Janet.

His tenants find him kind and helpful. A majestic lady shares his home, whom he treats with utmost deference. But Janet is never forgotten.

Adrian's picture is a grand success; artists, critics, rave over his "Renunciation." It is a masterpiece, with the delicate touch of genius.

A MODERN PROPHETESS.

A MODERN PROPHETESS.

CHAPTER I.

DOUGLAS MANOR was a stately brown-stone mansion, surrounded by green, sloping grounds which led to a picturesque lake fringed by willows. On the opposite side was a dilapidated old mill covered with ivy.

Strange stories were told of uncanny apparitions which haunted its precincts at midnight. For many years the mill had done a thriving business, but the miller had died, and the old mill belonged to the Douglas estate and was considered a useless ruin. Aaron Douglas, the great millionaire, had died, and his heirs met in the library to-day to hear his last will and testament. The January sun streamed through the clear, plate-glass windows on the rich furniture

and ponderous books so well loved by their owner.

Mrs. Douglas was a plump little woman, with dark hair and lustrous brown eyes. She had loved her husband devotedly, and his death left her desolate. She had no children, but her niece, Amanda Davis, and Robert Hilton, an orphan, had lived with her for years.

Amanda was small and slight, with sharp features and greenish eyes. Her foot tapped the floor impatiently, as if she was anxious to have the business over.

Robert Hilton was a tall, noble-looking man of twenty-five. His dark eyes were fixed on the lawyer, but his face was impenetrable.

Lawyer Gates was a majestic old man, with keen, blue eyes, and snow-white hair. Mr. Gates cleared his throat impressively.

There was a dead silence in which the ticking of the clock was distinctly heard.

Then Mr. Gates read impressively: "I, Aaron Douglas, being of sound mind,

do hereby give and bequeath to my dear wife, Estella Van Renssellaer Douglas, one-half of my whole estate, real and personal, and the other half, real and personal, to my adopted son, Robert Hilton Douglas."

Mr. Gates paused and eyed Robert pitilessly. Robert did not meet his gaze. His face was white as marble, his dark eyes fixed on Aaron Douglas' portrait. It was a handsome face, with stern, set lips and keen, gray eyes.

The sunlight touched the face, and the lips seemed to move.

"I am surprised at your husband's will," said Mr. Gates.

Amanda's eyes flashed.

"And *I* am forgotten," she said. "It is *infamous*. It is wrong, a terrible injustice."

"Will you please examine this signature?" said Mr. Gates.

Mrs. Douglas came forward. She studied it closely. The handwriting was bold and regular in outline.

"It looks like my husband's," she said.

Amanda studied it eagerly. "It is *not* Uncle Aaron's writing," she said positively; "it is only an *imitation*. This *signature* is a—forgery."

Robert's face became ashen. "What is *your* opinion, Mr. Hilton?" said Mr. Gates.

"I suppose it is Mr. Douglas' signature," said Robert coolly.

"No, sir, it is not," said Mr. Gates. "I have carefully studied and compared it. It is a clever imitation, but nothing genuine."

Mrs. Douglas started. "Impossible," she said.

"*Quite possible*," said Mr. Gates. "A few weeks ago your husband made another will, disinheriting Robert. He was very angry with him for certain reasons. That will is missing. This will was not signed, but laid aside in the safe. Who had the keys?"

CHAPTER II.

ROBERT sprang to his feet. "I had the keys to the safe."

Mr. Gates smiled. "The mystery is solved. Robert had the keys. He alone could benefit by the removal of one will and the signature of the other."

Mrs. Douglas looked bewildered. Amanda's green eyes flashed. Robert's face darkened.

"How dare you accuse me?" he said. "You know I am innocent."

"Your own lips condemn you," said Mr. Gates.

"You are a forger," cried Amanda. "This is your way of repaying uncle's generosity, aunt's affection."

Robert faced them bravely. "I am innocent," he said. "I did not touch that will."

"You will have to prove it," said Mr.

Gates. "Did you know Mr. Douglas had disinherited you?"

"Yes," said Robert firmly; "but I know he changed his mind afterward."

"Did you know why he was angry with you?" asked Mr. Gates.

Amanda listened eagerly.

"Yes," said Robert coolly.

"What was that reason?"

"I decline to answer," said Robert; "I am not on the witness stand."

Amanda breathed heavily. Her eyes were downcast.

"You may be obliged to reply," said Mr. Gates. "It is a case of abominable ingratitude, of deliberate crime. Mrs. Douglas, when will you begin the prosecution? I am at your service."

"There will be no prosecution," said Mrs. Douglas firmly. "There must be a great mistake. My husband loved and trusted Robert as his own son. Robert is incapable of such a deed. My husband probably destroyed the other will. He intended Robert should be his heir, for he often told me so."

"Madam," said Mr. Gates, "I am surprised at your lack of spirit. Facts are too strong. Robert, you had better confess."

"I have nothing to confess," said Robert proudly. "I am innocent. You must do as you see fit."

"Such mercenary conduct is abominable," said Mr. Gates. "You deserve punishment, sir."

"This affair must be kept secret," said Mrs. Douglas. "I rely on your honor, Mr. Gates, and on your respect, Amanda. Robert shall share with me, as this will indicate his father intended."

"I protest," said Amanda. "Aunt, you are crazy. You have no respect for uncle's wishes."

"Allow me to judge," said Mrs. Douglas quietly. "I know Robert is innocent. I know of no reason why he should be angry with Robert. He always pleased him."

"You are acting very unwisely," said Mr. Gates. "Your affection blinds your reason, madam."

Robert arose. "Mother," he said, "I thank you. I will not accept one penny of this estate till my innocence is proved." He bowed his head, then left the room.

CHAPTER III.

ROBERT walked down the avenue with bowed head. "Some more of Amanda's work," he muttered. "A female Judas. 'God made her, so let her pass for a woman,' but if she was a man"—he clinched his hands fiercely—"she should answer for this slander."

"How will Violet take it? A fairer, sweeter woman never breathed." He smiled and the shadows vanished.

He crossed the road to a pretty villa among trees and vines.

A lovely blond, with blue eyes and golden hair, hurried to meet him. "You are late," she said gayly. "I have waited so long."

Robert's face became grave. "The will has been read," he said gravely. "I have bad news." His dark eyes dwelt on her fair face lovingly.

"Bad news?" said Violet Gray; "tell me about it."

He told her all; the accusation, the blot on his honor.

Violet's face changed from surprise to dismay. "What nonsense," she said. "Surely you can prove your innocence?"

He shook his head sadly. "I wish I could. Unluckily, I alone held the keys to the safe. Mr. Gates and Amanda think me guilty."

"It looks so," said Violet. A curious change came over her.

Robert, the rich heir of Mr. Douglas, was a different person from the man accused of forgery and penniless.

"Violet," he said softly, "surely you do not think me guilty? Surely you trust me?"

"I don't know," said Violet. "It seems strange. There is no other person who could benefit by it."

"Violet," said Robert sternly, "you doubt me. Have you ever known me to prove dishonorable?"

"No," said Violet pettishly, "but

there was no reason. I suppose this sudden temptation was too much."

"Violet," said Robert, "I swear I am as innocent as yourself. How can you doubt me?"

"There is no one else," said Violet. "You must be guilty."

Robert sprang to his feet. Erect, proud, with flashing eyes, he looked like a king. "Yon need say no more," he said, "our engagement is ended. I release you."

"Very well," said Violet coolly. "It is the best you can do under the circumstances. I will never marry a criminal." She drew off from her finger a pearl ring and handed it to Robert.

Robert threw it on the floor and crushed it under his feet.

"Your love was more frail than this ring," he said bitterly. "So perishes my faith in you and all women."

After a pause he said entreatingly: "Have you no heart that you cast aside my love at the first breath of suspicion?"

"None for you," she said coldly.

Robert's strong features worked convulsively. "So be it," he said proudly. "You have treated me with cruel injustice, but the future will vindicate me."

He quitted the room hastily, his brain in a whirl. Her love had failed him when he needed it sorely. In a few hours, by a fiendish accusation, his life had been spoiled. He walked for hours through a pouring rain, trying to conquer the terrible tumult inside.

Mrs. Douglas had spent a sleepless night. She met him at the door. "Robert," she said, "you are ill."

"Not ill," he replied bitterly, "but weary of life."

"You are too young to say that," she said. "This mystery will be solved some day. I know you are innocent. Then there is Violet."

"She has given me up," he said bitterly. "She is dead to me. I will live it down." He went to his room.

Mrs. Douglas asked him no questions. She realized his terrible trial.

Mr. Gates kept his own counsel, but

some unknown person told the story, and Robert was regarded as a criminal who had betrayed his benefactors. Robert shunned society. He worked constantly as Mrs. Douglas' manager, and would receive only a moderate salary. He grew moody and absorbed with a cynical contempt for women.

Violet flirted unceasingly with many suitors.

CHAPTER IV.

THE July sun shone brightly on the silver and cut glass at Douglas Manor.

Mrs. Douglas had poured the coffee. Robert was eating his breakfast in moody silence. Amanda handed Mrs. Douglas a letter. She read it slowly, her pale, sorrowful face brightening.

"Ethel Stuart is coming to visit us," she said. "I hope you will like her, Robert."

"It will not make any difference to me," he said coldly. "Women do not interest me."

"She is a great society belle," said Amanda, "and a very charming woman; an heiress, too."

"Just the kind I detest," he said; "mere butterflies of fashion, fickle as the sea."

"She is a womanly woman," said Mrs. Douglas, "and very cultured."

"Cultured women do not crave my society," said Robert. "I am not a college bred man."

"But you might have been," said Amanda. "Aunt offered you a fine education."

Robert's face darkened. "Yes," he said bitterly, "life might have been very different, but it is not."

Mrs. Douglas' brown eyes regarded him wistfully. Robert had refused all share in the estate, except a small salary.

"I shall not trouble this paragon, this brilliant heiress," he said. "I have work to do."

He rose hastily and left the room.

Ethel Stuart arrived in the afternoon just as Robert entered the parlor. Mrs. Douglas greeted her warmly, and then "my son Robert" was introduced.

He coldly acknowledged the introduction and surveyed her critically.

Ethel was tall and slender, very fair, with dark brown hair and expressive gray eyes. Her dress a stylish blue suit,

bore the stamp of a city tailor, and her manner was cordial and elegant. Robert made no effort to converse, which rather piqued Ethel, as she was accustomed to attention from gentlemen.

That evening Mrs. Douglas invited her friends to meet Ethel, and insisted on Robert's joining them.

"What a wonderful science palmistry has become," said Maude Elliot, a vivacious brunette. "I wish there was a good palmist here. I would consult her."

Ethel smiled. "I know a little about it," she said.

"Oh! please read my hand," said Maude ecstatically; "I am wild about it."

"Very well," said Ethel gayly; "your left hand, please."

Maude stretched out her shapely hand, and the guests all listened with marked attention. "You are cheerful, impulsive," said Ethel, "not fond of practical matters, but like music. You have two admirers, a blond lawyer and an elderly widower."

The guests laughed heartily and Maude

blushed furiously. The "blond lawyer" bent eagerly forward, to Maud's discomfort.

"You have quarreled with the blond, but will make it up," said Ethel; "you will marry the blond within a year."

"Impossible," said Maude defiantly, her eyes meeting the blond lawyer's.

"Quite possible," said that individual calmly.

Maude's confusion was hidden as Ethel read the other hands, dealing sharp home-thrusts to all.

"This is marvelous, Miss Stuart," said Professor Stone; "you possess not only science, but great intuition. Where did you study?"

"In Boston," said Ethel. "While studying sciences I became interested in palmistry, and continued it for amusement."

"It is fortune-telling," said Robert stiffly. "I see nothing wonderful in it."

"It is not," said Ethel firmly; "but a complete science based on absolute facts."

"That is true," said Stone. "Only science could reveal my inmost thoughts."

"Any mind reader could do that," said Robert; "palmistry is only a fad. All new ideas seem truths. Some people say the soles of the foot reveal destiny."

Ethel's eyes flashed, her cheeks were rosy.

"That is absurd," she said; "that is going to the last extremity. We have had enough of Trilby."

"Yes," said Robert sharply. "Any common observer can read a person's tastes by the face."

"But Miss Stuart doesn't look at the face," said Stone. "I claim, with her, that palmistry is an exact science."

"It is an absurd delusion," said Robert.

"One that you will see proved yet," said the professor valiantly.

"We will not discuss it," said Ethel sweetly; "it is only ignorant people who doubt the significance of lines written by Nature itself. Maude, will you play for us?"

"With pleasure," said Maude; and music restored the harmony which Robert had disturbed, and the guests glided through the spacious rooms in the measures of the dance.

Lieutenant Bradford, a handsome brunette, waltzed past Robert with Ethel.

Robert clinched his teeth. "Can I ever forget it?" he said; "the brand of Cain? Miss Stuart, I detest you." But he watched her with a kind of fascination. "Whose fault is it," he muttered, "that I am not a cultured man? What have I in common with these gay butterflies?"

But still he remained, watching Ethel, the belle, surrounded by admirers. "She attracts and she holds them," he muttered. "The other women are more beautiful, but she possesses a charm they have not. I have no place here."

He left the house abruptly and taking a lantern went over to the old mill. All night his lantern burned in the old ruin. He had one of his restless fits, when his strong young manhood rebelled against the blight on his honor.

Why should he not go away to a distant land and work out his own career? He would go: he would be free. Then a woman's pale face and sad brown eyes rose before him, and he heard again Mrs. Douglas plead: "Robert, don't leave me. You are my only comfort. I trust you as my own son." He had promised; he could not break it. The burden must be borne. In the early dawn he crept back into the house, and Ethel, hearing him, said: "He is the rudest man I ever met; I am disgusted with him and will avoid him as much as possible."

And Robert having the same mind, they saw little of each other for days.

CHAPTER V.

It was a bright summer morning, but Amanda felt especially cross.

"Robert," she said sharply, "why didn't you walk home with the Dalton girls last night?"

"Because I am not a lady's cavalier," he said harshly; "I am only a plain farmer."

"Yes," said Amanda, "and the rudest bear I know. You vanished at ten o'clock. Where did you go?"

She faced him insolently, her green eyes full of malice.

"It is no matter," he said harshly. "I am past seven; I have known some people to die of curiosity suppressed. Be careful, Amanda, or you may die young." He laughed harshly and left her.

"You can see," said Amanda to Ethel, "he grows worse every day. After the

disgrace he brought here I should think he would act decently."

"Never mind that," said Mrs. Douglas.

"I will mind it," said Amanda, like a wild colt, whose temper is uncontrollable. "Ethel, Robert forged uncle's will to get a share for himself. There!"

Mrs. Douglas arose hastily and left them. Amanda's temper, like a full tide, swept all before it.

"Yes," said Amanda, "and aunt covers it up."

"I am surprised," said Ethel. "I wonder he stays here."

"It's because he's well off," said Amanda. "He hasn't got pluck enough to leave. Such rascality!"

"No wonder I dislike him," said Ethel, "if he is so dishonest."

Ethel forgot all about Robert as the days passed, filled with picnics, excursions and expeditions, till a strange incident occurred which changed her entire life.

CHAPTER VI.

It was an oppressive day in August.

Robert came in wearily and threw himself down on the couch. He had been busy since early morn. Mrs. Douglas looked up from her sewing.

"I wish you would not work so hard," she said.

"It's all the same," he answered. "It fills up the time."

"Amanda has gone to a tea party, and Ethel for a drive with the lieutenant."

"Yes," said Robert sharply. "Monday she rode with Judge Creighton; Tuesday with that New York swell. Every day a different man. Fickle girl!"

"She is not fickle," said Mrs. Douglas, "but charming. Every one likes her."

"A mere butterfly," said Robert bitterly. "I doubt if she can cook a decent

meal. A pretty wife she would make for a man with a small salary."

"But she need not marry a man with small means," said Mrs. Douglas; "she has plenty of chances for wealth. Besides she is not idle; she can paint pictures or write good articles."

"Mere play," said Robert, "and her palmistry worse than either. She leads all her admirers a dance just for sport."

"Robert, she does not waste many smiles on you," said Mrs. Douglas.

"No, thank Heaven!" said Robert. "I am proof against her." He felt irritable. Why should Ethel always drift along on the sunny side of life? Her constant cheerfulness annoyed him.

He fell asleep and when he awoke beheld a vision. Ethel, clad in fleecy white robes, calm as a June day, was sitting on the vine-shaded veranda. Her eyes, clear and sweet, gazed on the distant hills.

Robert felt conscious of a strange interest. He rose slowly and joined her.

"A beautiful view," he said, watching

the moonlight on Ethel's brown hair and fair face.

"Yes," she cried gayly. "Mrs. Douglas and Amanda are out, and I am keeping house. How good Mrs. Douglas is, always helping some one."

"Yes," said Robert, "in a quiet way without any public mission. She is not a butterfly."

"No," said Ethel, "as most women are, in your estimation. You need not be so emphatic. You mean me. I wonder do you realize how rude you are?"

"I believe in sincerity," he said sharply.

"So do I," she said; "and I consider you very rude. You think it your mission to make people uncomfortable."

"I suppose," he said, "your male friends never say unpleasant things to you."

"They do not," she said; "they respect me too highly."

"Exactly," Robert laughed bitterly. "All women care for is money and admiration. Here comes the postman. Allow me."

With elaborate courtesy Robert handed her a letter. Ethel opened it, little dreaming that fatal missive would change her whole life from prosperity to utter ruin. It was from her lawyer, and her face became ghastly as she read. Her heart almost ceased to beat, but she gave no outward sign.

Robert watched her keenly. "One of her many lovers has likely threatened to blow out his brains," he mused.

How little he dreamed of the tragedy before his eyes. Ethel longed to be alone, to cry aloud, to hear one kindly word to give her courage to endure.

She was alone, save for this hard, cruel misanthrope. Pride must aid her. She bit her pale lips till they were scarlet. Robert's first words stung her sharply. A heavy book fell from the table. Robert picked it up.

"Practical palmistry," he said; "your most invaluable aid. It is a pity you were not born penniless. You could use this work to advantage. You could make a fortune."

She looked at him steadily. "I may try it some time."

"Never," he said; "you, a proud aristocratic belle, take up that profession, come in contact with humanity. It is as impossible as for me to believe in it. I would sooner expect my mystery to be solved, and I freed from it."

"You will believe in it," said Ethel firmly. "The greatest mysteries which have puzzled the best detectives have been solved by it. There is nothing hidden from a skillful palmist. I am proud to be known as a palmist, which means scientist."

"I wonder," said Robert, "you do not begin professionally. Marriage should be a woman's aim. Why do you not make one man happy and let the rest proceed in peace?"

"I do not regard marriage as a woman's only aim," she said. "I have read too many hands to believe many marriages are happy."

"There is nothing more detestable," he said curtly, "than an old maid. They

have no business of their own and are always meddling with other people's. I am weary of these new women."

"And the new women are weary of the old bachelors," she said, laughing.

"You are seeking your ideal," he said crossly; "you will never find him. Such men have never been born and never will be."

"Perhaps not," Ethel said; "I am in no hurry to marry. Please do not worry over my matrimonial prospects."

"I am not worried," he said. "I hate to see you make fools of so many men."

"Then be thankful you are not one," she said lightly.

"What does society amount to?" said Robert. "What could you do if you lost your fortune?"

Ethel's lips whitened. This strange new trouble choked her; she shivered. "I do not know," she said. "Don't speak of it."

"A woman has no nerve," said Robert; "she cannot endure the mention of trouble. You would likely marry a man

old enough to be your grandfather, like Judge Creighton."

"Perhaps; and if I did, what is it to you?" said Ethel proudly.

"Nothing;" Robert bit his lip.

"You must have met fine types of womanhood," said Ethel.

Robert recoiled. Violet's fair, false face rose before him.

"Yes," he said, "I knew one—a beautiful girl, who deserted her lover at the first mention of his disgrace." His face was haggard with the old pain. Ethel felt vaguely sorry for him. Her eyes softened. She spoke gently.

"I am sorry," she said, "you had such an experience."

"I do not want your pity," he said harshly; "keep it for your victims. Thank Heavens! I am not one."

Ethel rose. "I wonder," she said, "if some men are born disagreeable and cannot help it? There ought to be a special petition in the Litany for them and their friends. Good afternoon." With stately courtesy she left him and passed up the broad staircase.

“Proud as Lucifer!” mused Robert, “will she ever feel?” How little he realized the trouble she was enduring without one audible sign; yet women have no nerve.

Ethel closed her door securely. With staring eyes she again read that fatal missive.

“What can I do? What shall I do?” she moaned, turning her face to the wall. She could not bear the sunlight. She drew down the blinds.

“I trusted him implicitly—my only relative, Uncle Seth. Perhaps Judge Creighton would know. No one must know. It must be a terrible mistake. How cruel of Robert to say those things. It took all my pride to keep still.” Silence reigned for hours, while Ethel faced the matter bravely.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT evening there was a ball at Colonel Prescott's. Ethel looked charming; her cheeks were slightly flushed, her eyes like stars. Outwardly she was the embodiment of happiness. Inwardly she was desperate over a mysterious trouble. She was surrounded by admirers. Judge Creighton, a stately, dark-eyed man, and Lieutenant Bradford, were especially devoted.

Robert, obeying an irresistible power, attended the ball. From a quiet corner he watched Ethel's conquests with strange interest. He did not mingle with the guests. Ethel passed him, leaning on the handsome lieutenant's arm. He was talking eagerly.

"The most eligible man in New York," mused Robert bitterly. "How infatuated he is. She will probably accept

him. How dare he look at her so attentively, as if his very soul hung on her lips? What is it to me!"

He hurried home. "I have had enough of balls. It is all foolishness."

Next morning he had an early breakfast.

Amanda waited on him. "Well!" she said blandly, "Ethel has enough admirers. Even that cynical judge is smitten; I can't see why."

"Yes," said Robert; "I wonder which she will take?"

"She said she would marry the richest man," said Amanda. "Bradford is worth millions. Likely she will take him. She said she pitied the woman who chose you, for your temper was the worst she ever knew."

"Did she say that?" asked Robert. A sharp pang touched him.

"Yes," said Amanda blandly, watching him. "She thinks you are the crudest specimen of raw material she ever saw."

Robert rose hastily.

"You are always telling unpleasant re-

marks," he said. "Crude as I am, she cannot impress me, as she does the rest." He hurried out of the house, his cheeks burning. He had not been very kind to her, but she need not have ridiculed him to Amanda. Whose fault was it that his career was spoiled? The old wrong rankled within him like a cruel wound. There was no hope of escape from this prison of circumstances. He worked persistently and avoided Ethel.

Amanda said to Ethel later: "Robert is so queer. His crime has changed him into a woman-hater. He said you were the most heartless flirt he knew, and that you need not try your hand on him, for he despised flirts."

"He need not worry," said Ethel, "I shall not try. What consummate conceit he has," she mused. "How ignoble to remain here, a dependent on Mrs. Doulgas after his crime. I despise him."

So these two, both in sore mental distress, misjudged each other.

Ethel spent long mornings out in the

fragrant old orchard studying palmistry. Her music and painting were laid entirely aside.

"Another fad," said Robert bitterly.

"A very sensible thing to do, if she likes it," said Mrs. Douglas, who was rather puzzled that Ethel should prefer science to constant amusement.

"A terrible waste of time," said Amanda blandly, to her especial crony, Mrs. Markham; "one would think she was going to earn her fortune by it."

Amanda had never read a book through in her whole life.

"They all say she's wonderful," said Mrs. Markham, "reading people's thoughts. She finds out all their secrets, that's sure."

"I don't believe it," said Amanda. "How can simple lines tell that? But I know she tells love affairs straight. There comes Deacon Walters. I must ask him about next Sunday's funeral. Good-by."

Amanda left her friend hastily and accosted the deacon.

"How do," she said sweetly. "Are you going to the funeral Sunday, Deacon Walters?"

The deacon, a thin, small man, with keen, blue eyes, stopped his high-spirited horse. "How do," he said graciously. "I hadn't decided, but I might go, I s'pose."

He looked at Amanda meditatively.

"I wanted to go," she said; "but Robert needs the horse, and I s'pose I must stay home, unless you could take me."

"I would be glad to," he said.

"Thanks, ever so much," she said, beaming on him. "I felt so sorry for that young man. Awful, wasn't it?"

"I have not heard any particulars," said the deacon. "Whoa there, Billy! This horse is dreadful skittish."

"Andrew Jones shot himself because Lizzie Stone wouldn't marry him. She is a heartless flirt, I think. I never knew him, but I think every one ought to attend the funeral."

"Hem! yes, I s'pose so," said the dea-

con. "He never 'mounted to much. Drank like a toper. Whoa there, Bill. My horse won't stand, Miss Amandy. I'll call at two Sunday." Billy started as if the evil spirits were after him.

Amanda entered the house radiant. She loved to attend funerals; she loved the deacon. Hence came her happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was Sunday, an oppressively warm day. Robert entered the library. "Every one out," he said. "Amanda is blissfully happy, gone with the deacon to Andrew Jones' funeral. She enjoys funerals as other people do theaters. She is after the deacon. I hope she may get him, then poor Mrs. Douglas will have a rest from her rule. Miss Ethel is likely flirting—her usual occupation—or studying that detestable palmistry."

He fell asleep on the couch. When he awoke dark shadows lay on the floor. He rose suddenly and then heard voices on the veranda. He could not leave the room without passing the people outside. He tried not to hear, but the voices were perfectly audible. Ethel and Lieutenant Bradford were outside.

"Ethel," said the lieutenant eagerly, "I have loved you from the first. You are so sincere, so womanly. Do not tell me there is no hope. I will wait a little while longer and give you time."

"It would not be right," Ethel's sweet voice faltered. "I do not love you. I could not accept so much from you and give nothing in return. Try and forget me."

"I cannot do that," he said brokenly; "you have filled my whole heart and soul. You make me feel stronger and braver always."

"I am so sorry you care," she said. Tears filled her eyes.

"Do not send me away," he pleaded, with the manly eloquence of a devoted lover. His dark eyes spoke his sincerity. Ethel saw as in a vision a dreary, uncertain future, shadowed by another's injustice. The lieutenant was a noble, gallant soldier, gifted with wealth and position. Then a dark, tragic face, with impenetrable eyes, came before her.

"I cannot," she said. She wept convulsively.

The lieutenant was a gentleman.

"I will not distress you," he said, his voice quivering. "May God bless and keep you."

He could not say more. This was the hardest battle he had ever fought, and long would be the time ere he conquered his love. He gazed at her as one would take a last farewell of the dead.

She looked very fair and sweet in the silvery moonlight, her head slightly bowed, and tears glistening in her clear eyes.

Then the lieutenant passed slowly down the walk. A few minutes after she heard his horse galloping rapidly away.

Ethel wept quietly. Was this the curse of Eve—to win man's love, and remain indifferent? The lieutenant was so noble.

Robert's heart bounded like a bird which, imprisoned, suddenly is freed. Among the dead ashes of his sad past love revived. She was not mercenary, else why had she rejected such a gallant

lover? Before he could stir from his involuntary hiding-place he heard Judge Creighton's musical voice. Fate was bent on teaching Robert some lessons in faith this night.

"I am glad to find you alone," said the judge. "I wish to see you especially."

Robert clinched his hands in the darkness.

"Is he going to propose too?" he muttered. "She would accept him."

Judge Creighton was considered the most brilliant, talented man in New York, and was a candidate for governor, with every possible chance of election. He was very handsome, in a dark, majestic style, and his manners were perfection.

Ethel started violently. "Good-evening," she said, ignoring his peculiar tone. "Will you be seated?"

"Thank you." His keen eyes noted her emotion. He had met Lieutenant Bradford, and readily understood his pale, worn face.

"I met Bradford," he said softly; "he nearly rode over me; seemed to be in great haste."

"Yes," said Ethel, "he joins his regiment at daybreak for Dakota."

What pitiless eyes the judge had! She would never reveal the lieutenant's trouble to him.

"Yes," said the judge very gravely. "Miss Stuart, I am very sorry you are troubled. Can I help you?"

"What do you mean?" Ethel's face whitened, but her voice was firm. Did he know of this strange trouble which was wearing her life away?

"I mean," he spoke very softly, "I know all. You have acted well, with most admirable nerve and self-control. No one knows but me. I shall not betray you if——"

Ethel made one last effort. She was majestic, with her proud head erect, every nerve tense with self-control.

"Tell me," she said proudly, "I am not apt at guessing."

The judge's admiration grew. "Affec-

tion," he said softly, "makes us quick to discern below the surface."

Ethel's heart almost ceased to beat.

"I know," he said, "you are penniless. Your uncle has embezzled all your fortune and fled. He has forged notes against me. Shall I punish him or not? The decision lies with you."

"I don't understand," said Ethel wearily. Earth seemed slipping away. A huge flood was ready to overwhelm her. Judge Creighton alone held it back.

Under the spell of his strong magnetism Ethel became mute.

"Your ancestors," said the judge, "have been free from dishonor heretofore. It need not touch you now if"—he paused.

"Speak," said Ethel, suddenly breaking the icy spell which bound her. "What is it you desire?"

"I desire you for my wife," said the judge, in cold, measured accents. "The world will never know your uncle's disgrace. Pride is dearer to you than life."

A terrible humility crushed Ethel to

the earth. Lieutenant Bradford had offered her love without price, and this merciless man offered it as the price of her uncle's honor.

"But I do not love you," she said coldly.

"That makes no difference," he said. "You have fascinated, charmed me as no other woman has ever done. You are not fitted for poverty. You cannot earn your own living. You cannot bear the public disgrace of your uncle." Very eloquently he pleaded disgrace and poverty against wealth, honor, all the world holds dear. Ethel was very weary. For three months she had suffered this disgrace and given no sign. The end had come.

"And if I refuse?" she said. The judge gazed at the proud, white face.

"Then the world must know. The notes were mine. They signify heavy losses, but for your sake——"

"Stop," Ethel raised her hand; "I can bear no more. Leave me, please."

"As you will." The judge touched

her hand lightly. Ethel shuddered. Was this love he offered her, or selfishness?

“I have won her,” thought the judge, as he passed down the avenue. “It was a lucky day when her old uncle forged those notes. How proud she is. She will sacrifice all for that indomitable pride.”

Ethel sat alone in the moonlight. The strain would soon be over. She could not bear sympathy. She would not ask for it. She would marry Judge Creighton. He was very talented. He seemed like a majestic marble monument, far above all earthly emotion.

CHAPTER IX.

"MISS STUART," said Robert, appearing, "the air is chilly. Will you have a shawl?"

"Thank you, I am going in." Ethel spoke in wonder. He had never offered her any service before or spoken so gently.

"You are in trouble?" he said. "Can I help you?"

"No one can help me," she said wearily. "Some people must suffer in expiration for others."

"Do you suffer?" he said. "I am sorry."

Ethel felt moved to tell him. No, what interest could he have in her affairs?

"I have suffered for years," he said, "and will always."

"But it was your own doing," Ethel said.

"Never!" His eyes flashed. "I am as innocent as yourself." He laughed bitterly. "You have heard the disgraceful story. You believe it, like all the rest, except Mrs. Douglas." His tone softened. "Only a miracle could prove my innocence, and the days of miracles are past."

"No," said Ethel, "miracles occur every day. Tell me all."

She felt vaguely remorseful. Had she wronged him? If so, she must atone. One method would prove it.

"Ethel," said Amanda, "do you know it is midnight? Robert, are you here? I am surprised."

"It is a glorious night," said Robert curtly; "nothing surprising that we lingered. How was the funeral?"

"It is the last one I ever attend," said Amanda crossly. "The deacon's horse ran away into the funeral procession, upset two carriages and broke my bonnet all to pieces. It's a pity the deacon

can't drive a sober horse, especially for such occasions."

"You must teach him better," said Robert gravely, "when you marry him. It's a wonder you didn't have a funeral of your own."

Amanda, with her spring bonnet all mashed in, was a comical figure.

Ethel laughed hysterically. It was a relief after the tragic events of the past hours.

"It was no fun for me," said Amanda crossly. "When I go again with that cantankerous old horse, I'll know it. If I didn't know that you and Robert hated each other so, I should judge you'd been spooning out here so late."

"We never spoon," said Robert curtly; "we leave that for you."

He walked into the house. Did Ethel hate him? Why should she not? He certainly had been rude and unkind. How he had wronged her. She had been making an heroic struggle and given no sign.

Ethel pondered over many matters that long summer night.

“I will study the judge well,” she mused; “his hand will be a silent witness, whether he can make me happy. Is Robert innocent? He cannot be. Proof is too strong. A divine power has written indelibly his past upon his palm. I will know what it contains.”

CHAPTER X.

It was the 31st of October and a bright fire was blazing in the grate in the library at Douglas Manor. Ethel was studying intently a book on palmistry, Mrs. Douglas was sewing, Amanda talking volubly to the deacon. She had quite forgiven Billy's mishap. Before the evening passed she expected he would propose. She was thinking how she could get rid of the rest when Judge Creighton appeared. Mrs. Douglas rose to retreat, but Ethel nodded in dissent. Robert sat watching her. The judge seemed rather surprised at Ethel's desire to retain the rest.

"Still studying?" he said.

"Yes," she said quietly. "I expect to take up palmistry professionally in New York."

"Impossible," he said in surprise.

"Quite possible," said Ethel.

"I should think she would," said Amanda, "the way affairs come true that she tells."

The judge smiled. "Undoubtedly," he said, "Miss Stuart possesses great talent for that science, but she is not aware that she would be classed among common fortune-tellers."

"Palmistry is as far above fortune-telling as stars above the earth," said Ethel. "It is a science founded on facts known centuries ago. I shall maintain its dignity."

"When you can prove to me," said the judge, "that it reveals one's hidden qualities—the inner self—I will believe it. What do you say, Mr. Hilton?"

"When it will reveal innocence and discover the criminal, I shall believe," said Robert.

"Two against one," said Ethel quietly; "as a penalty you must both have your hands read."

"You can possess my hand at any time," said the judge in a low voice.

Ethel flushed slightly as she took the judge's hand. If that silent witness revealed him to be noble, sincere, she would marry him. She had known the most profound secrets revealed by the hand.

The judge extended a large, shapely hand. She studied it attentively. "A Jupiterian type, great ambition, will power, command over men, talent and eloquence; the heart line wanting almost entirely; keen intellect; great success."

"Is that all?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Marriages?" he asked.

"None," she said quietly.

"Are you in earnest?"

"I am," she said, "as far as you are concerned."

He bit his lip. "Why?"

"Because you are cold, critical, incapable of real affection," she said. "One would literally be frozen to death in heart and soul who married you."

This talk was inaudible to the rest.

"Come," said Amanda, "let us hear the result."

"I bow to Miss Stuart's decision," he said, "and will explain later." He was furious that she had read his cold, merciless nature so correctly.

Robert looked strangely elated.

"I will punish him," thought the judge.

"I propose," he said blandly, "that Mr. Hilton have his hand read. There is a mystery there which you can unveil probably with your remarkable intuition."

"And if I refuse?" said Robert, his eyes flashing.

"Then our opinion will remain the same—that you are guilty," said the judge blandly.

There was dead silence. They all glanced at each other, with pale, startled faces. The clock ticked monotonously. The firelight cast queer shadows on Mr. Douglas' portrait. The stern lips seemed to move entreatingly toward Robert as if to speak.

The judge knew of Robert's disgrace.

His keen eyes to-night read in his dark face rightly the repressed feeling in his steadfast eyes. Ethel spoke first. She believed Robert guilty. She declined to publicly expose the old crime. "I decline to read Mr. Hilton's hand," she said "without his consent."

"He has been exposed in one instance," said Amanda; "probably he would not dare have more revealed."

"Amanda, I protest," said Mrs. Douglas; "this is unkind, unjust. I believe he is innocent, and I alone am the one to judge."

Robert arose erect, proud, and faced them all, his accusers. They all but one believed him guilty.

"Miss Stuart," he said, "do you believe the hand can reveal secrets known only to their owner?"

"I do," she said gravely. "The hand has proved a silent and truthful witness where detectives have failed."

"And can a hand proclaim a person's innocence?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, most assuredly," she said. "A

man accused of murder was proven innocent by his own hand, and the culprit found later, who confessed."

"I suppose an offense like forgery," said the judge coolly, "would not be indicated?"

"Yes." Ethel's lips were white. Would he reveal her secret? Probably. His hand had put her on guard and had revealed the real nature of the judge as years of friendship could not have done.

Robert drew a chair to her. "Then," he said slowly, extending his hand, "I am ready for your decision."

Ethel studied it carefully. Here was the real nature, innocent or guilty.

CHAPTER XI.

ALL listened eagerly; the judge with a sarcastic smile and Amanda with some strong emotion which made her eyes glitter strangely.

Ethel forgot all else. She saw reflected as in a mirror a strong, noble nature, cruelly repressed, and suffering keenly under injustice. And as she studied she saw something more—an intense love for some fair woman of which he was yet unconscious. She had been cruelly prejudiced. She would own her mistake. Pity and sympathy surged within her like a flood.

“We are waiting,” said Amanda sharply. “Robert’s hand must be a whole volume.”

“It is,” said Ethel; “a whole volume of noble manhood, falsely accused, blighted under the most terrible injustice.”

"Indeed!" said Amanda. "Do you mean Robert is innocent?"

"I declare him utterly and absolutely innocent," said Ethel, rising. "He has noble principles. He is utterly incapable of forgery, or any crime."

Robert's eyes softened. "Thank you," he said gratefully.

"But the proof?" said the judge. "That sounds well. But how can you convince the world, Miss Stuart?"

"As I will convince you," she said. "If the whole world declared him guilty I would not believe. His hand, written in divine characters, declares his innocence."

"Who did it, if he didn't?" said Amanda. "Next, Ethel will think she is Moses, and ask the sun to stand still; or was it he who lighted the burning bush?"

Amanda's ideas were rather mixed.

"We need no further proof," said Mrs. Douglas. "I have always known he was innocent."

"But who was the man?" said Amanda sharply.

"It was not a man," said Ethel slowly; "it was a woman."

"That's great!" Amanda almost shrieked. "Perhaps you can tell her name."

"I can," said Ethel. "Let me see your hand."

"Nonsense," said Amanda. Her face grew livid. "This is an outrage," she said. "Aunt, order Ethel out of the house. I will not submit."

"Amanda," said Mrs. Douglas, "be quiet. Why should you dread that Ethel should read your hand?"

Amanda submitted, though scarlet with anger. If only the deacon was not there!

Ethel took her slender white hand. Here, in pink and white, were malice, jealousy and—crime. Yes, there was no mistake.

Ethel arose. "The search is ended," she said; "here is the criminal."

"It's a falsehood," said Amanda. "Robert alone is the guilty one."

All Ethel's pity vanished. "He has

suffered enough," she said, "through you; don't add to it."

"Ethel, is this true?" said Mrs. Douglas. "Are you positive?"

"Absolutely," said Ethel; "or there is no truth in palmistry."

"Amanda, have you allowed Robert to suffer all these years for your fault?" said Mrs. Douglas.

Amanda's eyes were downcast. She shook with fright. She dared not deny it.

"Answer me," said Mrs. Douglas; "I will know."

CHAPTER XII.

"Yes, it's true," said Amanda sullenly. "You always favored Robert. I couldn't stand it. I forged the will. Uncle wanted Robert to marry me. He refused. I determined he should pay for it, and he did." There was no regret in her tone.

Robert thought of the years wasted; of his ambition cruelly repressed; so did Mrs. Douglas.

"This is dreadful," she said, "abominable. You have made him suffer all these years. You shall sign a confession and he shall be publicly cleared."

In vain Amanda shrieked and pleaded. The confession was written and signed, and then Amanda's fury gave full vent.

"Ethel Stuart," she said, "I hate you. I know your secret. Your learned uncle committed forgery, and you are a beg-

gar. I heard Judge Creighton tell you so."

They all were speechless. Ethel drew her figure erect till she towered over Amanda.

"It is true," she said, "but it is not my fault."

Judge Creighton made no effort to relieve her cruel embarrassment. He hoped she might suffer. He was merciless.

Ethel's weary eyes gazed hopelessly around.

"Is this true, Ethel?" said Mrs. Douglas, bewildered.

"Yes," Ethel said.

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Douglas; "of course it is no fault of yours."

Robert made one bound to her side. Ethel grew suddenly white. She swayed unsteadily, then recovered herself. He placed his strong arm around her and led her to a seat.

"This is what comes of palmistry," screamed Amanda. "Ethel Stuart ought to be turned out."

"Keep still," said the deacon; "what's the use of such a row?"

This settled Amanda. She uttered a hysterical scream.

"Nobody knows where the right will is," she said, "that gives Robert half; and they never will know."

She leaned heavily against her uncle's portrait. There was a snapping, a sudden jar, and the heavy portrait fell on the floor. All rushed forward. Amanda was unhurt, but the back of the picture was split in two. There was revealed the missing will, and Robert as the rightful heir.

"Found at last," said Mrs. Douglas, reading it. "Robert, my son, how I have grieved over your trouble." She laid her hand upon his arm tenderly.

"You never doubted me," said Robert tenderly. The old gloom departed from his eyes. He stood erect, like a man suddenly released from a heavy burden. Life was renewed. His honor was restored, and by the silent witness of his own hand, interpreted by a woman whom he had doubted. Could he ever atone? He feared not.

"Miss Stuart," he said, "I doubted you. I cannot find words to express my gratitude. You have established my innocence and made life bright once more."

"I am very glad," she said. His voice thrilled her strangely.

"Yes," said the judge curtly. "Now as she read so much on your hand, you cannot do less than offer it to her. It's a very pretty little scene and needs only a wedding to complete it. I am *de trop*, so I withdraw. Good-evening."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE stately judge withdrew in anger and disgust. His hand had been a silent witness against him; and ever after he was wont to speak bitterly against palmistry. Likewise did Amanda. She departed to a distant city, where no one knew of her crime, and where no detestable palms were raised; and with her departure peace and happiness reigned at Douglas Manor such as had never been known in her days of iron rule. Robert regained his old geniality and no longer shunned his fellow creatures.

Violet endeavored to win back his old affection, but it was dead forever. Robert's ideal was a womanly woman; such Ethel had proved to be.

Ethel, true to her resolve, went to New York and gained fame and fortune in her

profession, and her uncle's disgrace could not harm her. She had conquered her pride.

One day as she sat in her parlor the door opened quietly and Robert appeared. He looked ten years younger and very different from the moody man she had known. She greeted him cordially, but quietly.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MRS. DOUGLAS wants you," he said. "The roses are in bloom and your pale cheeks need them. Are you weary of palms? Can you descend to earth for a while?"

Ethel smiled. There were pathetic lines around her mouth.

"Earth is good enough for me," she said. "I am weary of study and work and society. Take me home."

Mrs. Douglas gave her cordial welcome. They sat on the veranda in the still summer night, the air sweet with rose perfume. Mrs. Douglas rose quietly and left them.

Robert told her how he had heard Bradford and the judge propose to her. "You refused wealth and position," he said; "I wondered why."

"Because I did not love them," she

said. Her clear eyes met his own. His eager eyes read hers truly. Then his firm hand closed on hers, and drawing her closely to him his lips murmured his love. And Ethel did not refuse him. Like a bird, weary of struggle, she nestled closely to him. So Robert Hilton's vindication was complete and the prophecy was realized.

THE END.



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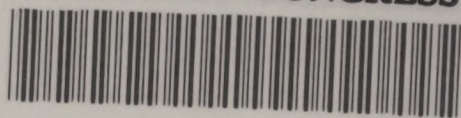
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